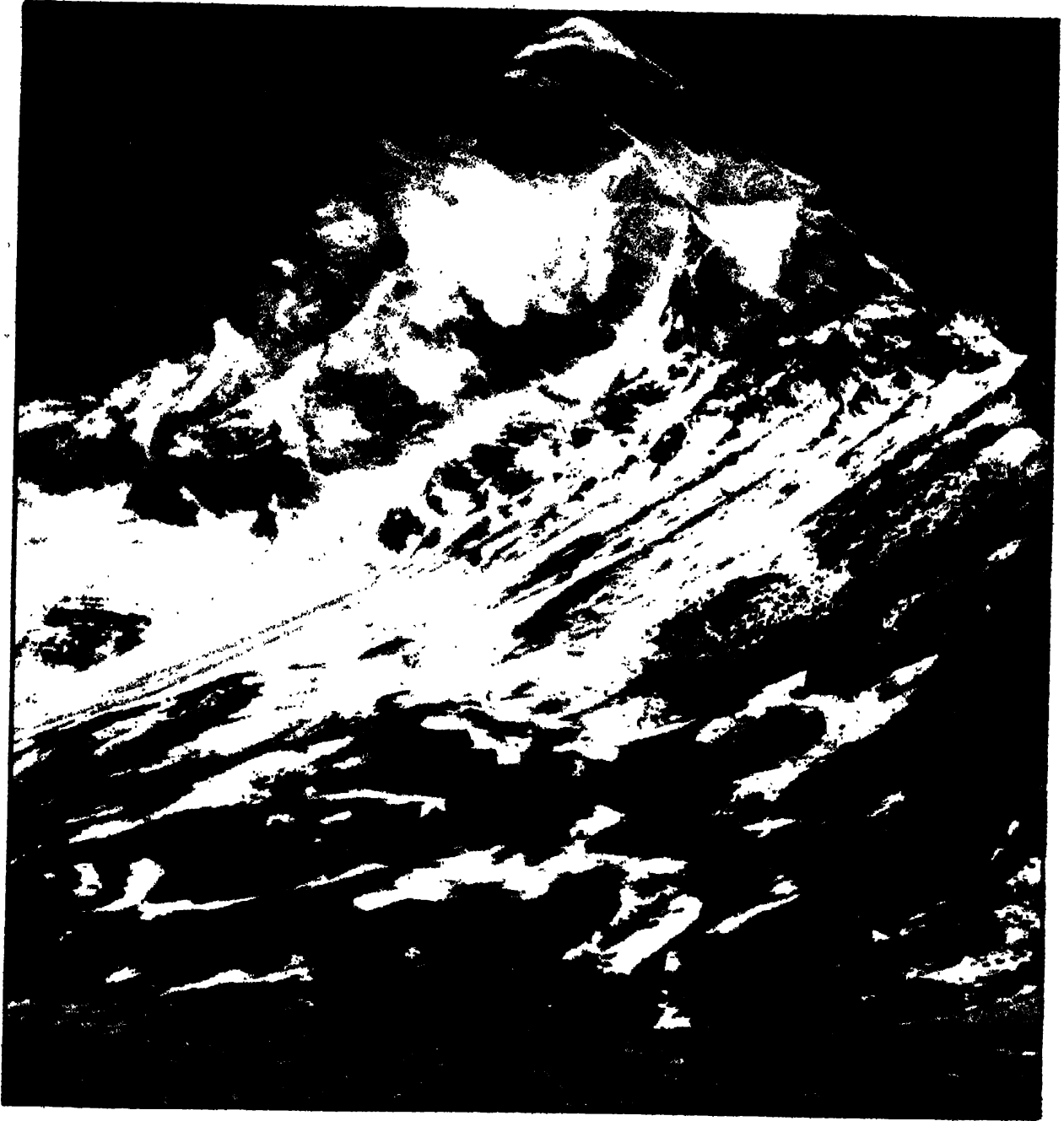


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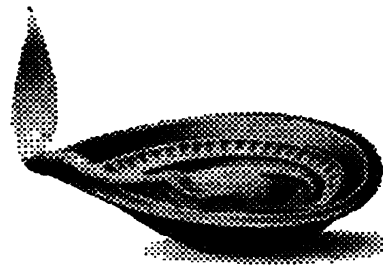
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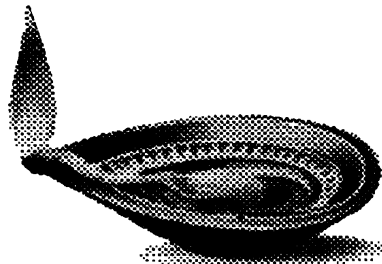
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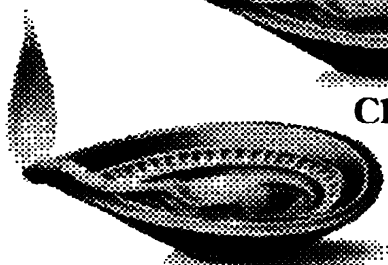
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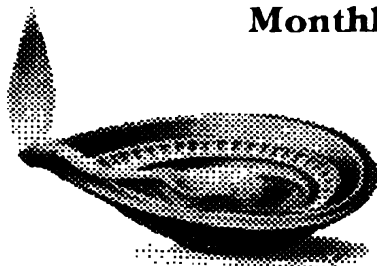
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MARCH 1991

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Arise! Awake!
And stop not till the Goal is reached.

Prabuddha Bharata

Or Awakened India

VOL. 96

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NO. 3

The Divine Message

Prahlada said : Wise men should begin the practice of devotional disciplines (*Bhāgavata-dharma*) from their very boyhood. For, human birth in which alone devotional disciplines can be practised, is extremely rare, and it is uncertain how long life lasts. The highest and noblest act for a man to do in life is to surrender himself at the feet of Lord. For He is the dear one, the soul, the master and the friend of all beings. Just as all creatures, having a body, experience naturally a measure of sorrow, happiness also accrues to them naturally without their effort. The *Prarabdha* or the Karma that has brought the body into being, yields them both these types of experience, and no special effort is required for them. Beyond exhausting life's span, nothing is achieved by efforts put forward for the attainment of pleasure and the avoidance of pain. A man full of desires never attains to that state of Bliss which one who serves the Lord attains.

Therefore one entangled in the fearful state of *Samsāra*, if he is really intelligent, should in every way strive for the attainment of the Divine before the fall of this short-lived human body, even while it is in its full vigour and power. Man lives for a hundred years at the most. Of this span of life, if a man is of uncontrolled senses, half is wasted in sleep at night when he is in a state of darkness and inertia, almost like that of a dead body. Of the remaining half, the first twenty years are spent in the ignorance of childhood and the playfulness of early youth. Another twenty are spent in the decrepitude of old age, which reduces man to a helpless condition. Chained to domestic life,

and oblivious of the ultimate purpose of his existence, the rest of man's life too is wasted in the pursuit of insatiable sexual enjoyments and under the domination of overwhelming infatuation.

Where is the man among those attached to their homes, enslaved by the senses and bound by the strong cords of affection to their near and dear ones, that can make even an effort to liberate himself ? Who can give up the hankering for wealth which is dearer to man than his life itself — wealth for earning which thieves, servants, merchants and others pawn their very lives ? How can a man renounce the intimacies he has been having with his dear wife in privacy as well as her loving prattle, his close friends and his lisping infants to whom he is bound by cords of affection ? How can he renounce his sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, and sickly and pitiable parents — his attractive furniture and other household articles, houses, cattle, servants and hereditary vocations, when powerful memories of them are attracting his mind ? Unsatisfied with enjoyments and imprisoned by greed in the cocoon of bondage-generating works, a man considers indulgence in sex and gluttony as the main purpose of life. How can a man in this condition, overpowered as he is by such an increasingly infatuated outlook, practise renunciation ? (Therefore if a person is to tread the path of devotion, he must practise renunciation from early life, before all kinds of tendencies and entanglements have become finally established.)

Srimad Bhāgavata, VII.6.

Nataraja-The Divine Dancer

"One thing I must tell you," said Swami Vivekananda addressing the intent eager audience at the Parliament of Religions on 19th September 1893, "...we find that somehow or other by the laws of our mental constitution, we have to associate our ideas of infinity with the image of the blue sky, or of the sea, so we naturally connect our idea of holiness with the image of a church, a mosque, or a cross. The Hindus have associated the idea of holiness, purity, truth, omnipresence, and such other ideas with different images and forms."¹

The Primordial Energy, or the Creative Force that creates and permeates everything, even down to the minutest of the sub-atomic particles called quarks, cannot be seen or conceived. But it is accessible to the intuitive perception. This most subtle invisible Energy, or limitless consciousness, is made visible through the tangible concrete medium of religious symbols and divine images. The artistic excellence which created these images was proximate to living reality. There is an intimate relationship between spiritual reality and phenomenal reality, and it is achieved through the external representation of the profound internal vision. A religious symbol always invokes in the mind of the worshipper the eternal truth which it represents. The use of holy images thus becomes a support for meditation and capable of kindling in the devoted, visions of the unseen world of divine reality and beauty.

The creative imagination has always played a constructive role in all the religions of the world, helping people form ideas of and worshipful attitudes toward Ultimate Reality. 'Formless Void', 'Unmanifest Absolute', or 'in-describable state of bliss' — these abstruse expressions do not elicit fertile responses in the beginner on the spiritual path. They remain only as attractive rhetoric or purely intellectual formulae to inspire awe in people. Mind needs names and forms to function. Without names and images it cannot proceed much from the beginning. It is highly advanced spiritual souls only who like to dwell in the state of 'Pure Awareness' bereft of names and forms. Even the *Gita* cautions that the contemplation of the Absolute or the Unmanifest is very difficult. This arduous path is not easily accessible to all and sundry. It is through concentrating on the object of its devotion, or on the personal divinity, that the mind achieves a certain degree of one-pointedness, and is able to put aside the multiplicity of distractions. The great Yoga-philosopher Patanjali, has advocated this practical method in his *Yogaśāstra*. The Supreme Knowledge is directly accessible to a concentrated mind. Yoga and art, in Hinduism, were wedded together. The artist, in Buddhism was called *sādhaka*, *mantrin* or *yogin*. The matchless beauty of clouds, flowers, tender leaves or snow-clad mountains can act as external stimulus sufficient to throw mystics into internal states of rapture. Sri Ramakrishna, when he was barely six years old, went into ecstasy when he saw snow-white cranes against the background of dark spreading clouds. "Artistic emotion," comments Romain Rolland, "a passionate instinct for the beautiful, was the first channel bringing him into contact with God."² Many devotees and

1. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989) Vol. I, p.16.

2. Romain Rolland, *The Life of Ramakrishna* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1970) p.23.



saints had the taste of divine inebriation in the presence of magnificent images of the Madonna, of Christ, of Siva, Visnu or the Goddess Durga, their personal 'chosen forms of God'. Truth, beauty, art, aesthetic appreciation and mysticism are inseparably woven together. As long as mind is not able to transcend the plane of duality, so long idolatry cannot be branded as superstition. Idolatry has, over millenia, not only satisfied the thirst of souls but has also helped them in their spiritual evolution.

The image of Natarāja, the timeless Siva dancing, owes its origin to the creativity of

Saivism in South India. The Saiva scriptures pay rich tributes of praise and offer insightful observations about the idea behind the divine figure. It is an embodiment of the transcendental truth, beauty and joy of Divine Reality. Impersonal truths are the profound realizations that come as revelations to gifted souls. In Kakrighat, near Almora, under the peepul tree, Vivekananda had the rare realization while in meditation, of the oneness of the macrocosm with the microcosm. In the microcosm of the body everything that is there in the macrocosm exists. The whole universe exists within an

atom. The microcosm and the macrocosm are built on the same plan. In other words, Vivekananda's was the ineffable experience of Siva embracing Siva. Such mind-boggling visions are beyond the power of just-awakened spiritual souls to grasp or contain. To help them understand and appreciate, concepts of the limitless or the all-pervading, require the clothing of concrete symbolism. It is the representation in the Natarāja, the cosmic dance of Siva, that tries to unveil the supreme truths of God. The graceful gestures of hands and feet of Natarāja are replete with deep metaphysical significance.

Siva's worship (Saivism) is as old as Indian civilization. Archaeological finds in Mohenjodaro and Harappa have brought to light some of the deep roots of the cult of Siva spreading beyond the chalcolithic age. The antiquity of Siva's worship in the symbolic *Sivalinga* is prehistoric. The *Mahabharata* and other works repeatedly make mention of the spread of Saivism and its vitality. Krishna himself figures in one place as the chief devotee of *Mahādeva*, and through his austerities he had the glorious vision of the Lord. The *Kirātārjunīya* episode also pointed to the supremacy of Siva. Siva appeared before Arjuna in the disguise of a hunter and humbled his pride. Saivism thrived under the Guptas in the fourth century A.D. according to the records of Megasthenes, the Greek ambassador sent to India by Seleucus. In the South under the patronage of the Pallavas (fourth to ninth century) and Colas (eighth to twelfth century), Saivism became immensely popular. A number of Saiva saints, called *Nayanmars*, through their exemplary lives, ushered in an era of devotion. They also produced prolific devotional and philosophical literature, keeping Siva or Nataraja as their converging point. It is known as *Saiva-siddhanta*, or the final position of Saivism. In Kashmir, in the first half of the ninth century, Saivism as a monistic system of thought arose. It too left a considerable impact. The *Puranas*, specially *Vāyu*, *Kūrma*, *Linga*, *Siva* and others, played commendable roles in

taking different strands from prevalent beliefs and practices and weaving them into a tapestry of religio-philosophical systems.

We learn from history that the image of Siva, made of precious metals, was used in domestic worship during the reign of the Guptas. Over the centuries this art of image casting reached a state of high perfection, revealing aesthetic and religious inspiration. Appreciating the metal icons of South India, "especially in the Kingdom of the Colas," A. L. Basham writes, "the greatest Indian works of art in metal were made by a school of bronze-casters which has not been excelled in the world."³ Further he adds, "The greatest and the most triumphant achievements of Tamil bronze-casting are undoubtedly the dancing Sivas, of which there are many examples dating from the eleventh century onwards. It was as 'Lord of the Dance' that the Tamil Masters specially delighted in portraying the god. Thus Siva appears as the very essence of vital, ordered movement, eternal youth and ethereal light... . Once the religious background is understood, even the Westerner can recognise in the finest specimens of the dancing Siva a genuine religious inspiration, a wholly successful effort at depicting in plastic terms divine truth, beauty and joy."⁴ The Chidamburam temple in Tamil Nadu was already famous in the seventh century A.D. and the sculptures of its *gopura* (gateway) show all the hundred and eight different modes of dance listed in the *Bharata-nāṭya Śāstra*, the ancient treatise on dance.

Cosmic activity is the central motif of Natarāja's dance. The exquisite figures of Nataraja in bronze and sculptures depicting his different moods are essentially based on *Paurāṇic* stories. It was the stupendous attempt to portray noumenon and phenomena in one

3. A. L. Basham, *The Wonder That Was India* (London: Fontana-Collins, 1975) p.377.

4. *Ibid.* pp.377-78.

divine personality. In this dance pose one witnesses the reversal of roles of Siva and Sakti. Siva is usually described as Unmanifest-actionless and Sakti, his spouse, as the Manifest-dynamic principle. But in this unique portrayal, Siva is dynamic and Uma is the silent witness. It is said in the *Lalitasahasranāma : Maheśvar mahākālpa mahātāndava saksinyai* (V. 232)—*who is the witness of the Supreme Lord's awesome cosmic dance*. Among the various dances of Natarāja, the Saiva scriptures enumerate seven important ones: 1) the *Kālīka-Tāndava*, which represents creation; 2) *Gouri-Tāndava* and 3) *Sandhyā-Tāndava* each denote both the aspects, origination and protection; 4) *Pralaya-Tāndava* each indicates the destruction of the universe; 5) *Tripura-Tāndava* signifies the veiling power (illusion); 6) *Urdhva-Tāndava* specifies release from the bondage, or liberation; and 7) *Ānanda-Tāndava* connotes the dance of the supreme bliss. All these dance poses of Siva encompass the ideas of creation of the universe, its preservation and final dissolution, or absorption, back into the Absolute at the end of the cycle.

Much meaning is attached to the *Mudras*, the poses of the hands and feet of Natarāja. All these indicate the Supreme Lord's activities in different aspects. In most of the images, especially in the magnificent Cola bronzes of the ninth and tenth centuries, Siva is depicted with four arms and flying tresses, dancing on the prone figure of a dwarf demon known as Mulayaka, the *Apasmāra-puruṣa*, symbolic of man's ignorance or ego. The back right hand of Natarāja holds the *damaru* or tabour and the front right hand gestures with the *abhaya-mudrā*, symbolizing God's protection. The rear left hand holds fire in its palm, and the front left hand is held across the Lord's chest in the *gajahasta*, or elephant pose, indicating auspiciousness. The raised left foot indicates the Lord's grace in granting liberation; and the firmly planted right foot gives shelter to weary souls. The locks of Nataraja's hair stand out in

several strands and are mingled with the Ganga, a skull, and the crescent moon, all traditional insignia recalling Siva's protecting grace, renunciation and *tapasya*. Siva's figure is encircled by a ring of flames denoting the Lord's aureole. Fire held in the palm shows reabsorption of the universe back into Himself.

The dance executed by Siva as King of Dancers is the visible symbol of the cosmic rhythm, and it shows that Śiva is the source of all movement within the universe. The purpose of His dance is to release men from the bondage of illusion. The stage of the dance is the centre of the universe, in reality, within the heart. A legend says that Siva once went to Darukāvan to teach a group of ṛsis who had become very egotistical. They tried to drive the Lord away with their might, but before Him they could not do anything. Enraptured, Siva danced, and his divine dance released the sages from the thralldom of their delusion and they took shelter at His feet. Siva's gestures are five-fold and indicate his five-fold activity (*pancakṛtya*). The *damaru* symbolizes the creation. Out of its sounds the universe is produced. These sounds are electro-magnetic vibrations. Bestowing protection to created beings means Siva blesses them with fearlessness, in love of the Divine Lord. Bearing fire and offering liberation to beings, Siva indicates that He alone is the Source and the Divine Goal of all living and non-living things. Worshipping Him there is no death, but eternal Life. The Lord Himself is the Primal Energy, the Creative power, the Father and Mother of the universe, and the Ever-benign Receptacle to which the whole universe dissolves in the end.

In the Saiva scriptures there are beautiful descriptions— "O my Lord, Thy hand holding the sacred damaru has created and ordered the heavens and earth and the other worlds and innumerable souls. Thy lifted hand protects both the conscious and unconscious order of Thy creation. All these worlds are transformed by Thy hand bearing fire. Thy sacred foot, firm on

the ground, gives an abode to the tired souls struggling in the coils of Karma. It is Thy lifted foot that grants eternal bliss to all that approach Thee. These five actions are indeed Thy Handiwork.

Our Lord is the Dancer, who, like the heat latent in firewood, diffuses His power in mind and matter and makes them dance in their turn."

The mystic dance of Natarāja has commanded the adoration of wise men, devotees, artists and savants down the ages. It is one of the grandest symbols ever conceived in the world's religious history. Ananda Coomaraswami significantly remarked that the dance of Siva is a synthesis of science, religion and art. Elaborating he said : "The Nataraja...affords an image of reality, a key to the complex tissue of life, a theory of nature, not merely satisfactory to a single clique or race, nor acceptable to the thinkers of one century only, but universal in its appeal to the philosopher, the lover, and the artists of all ages and all countries. How supremely great in power and grace this dancing image must appear to all those who have striven in plastic forms to give expression to their intuition of Life. ...Every part of such an image as this is directly expressive, not of any superstition or dogma, but of evident facts. No artist of today, however great, could more exactly create an image of that Energy which science must postulate behind all phenomena."⁵

It has already drawn the attention of some scientists. Fritzof Capra, the popular writer, said : "The Eastern mystics have a dynamic view of the universe similar to that of modern physics, and consequently it is not surprising

that they, too, have used the image of the dance to convey their intuition of nature. ...The metaphor of the cosmic dance has found its most profound and beautiful expression in Hinduism in the image of the dancing Shiva. ...According to Hindu belief, all life is part of a great rhythmic process of creation and destruction, of death and rebirth, and Shiva's dance symbolizes this eternal life-death rhythm which goes on in endless cycles. ...The dance of Shiva is the dancing universe; the ceaseless flow of energy going through an infinite variety of patterns that melt into one another. ... Modern physics has thus revealed that every sub-atomic particle not only performs the energy dance, but also is an energy dance, a pulsating process of creation and destruction."⁶ In this way another scientist, Heinz Pagels concluded his book *The Cosmic Code* saying: "Science shows that the visible world is neither matter nor spirit; the visible world is the invisible organisation of energy."⁷

The Primal Energy—that remote impersonal Principle, Divine to the Hindu, becomes intimately personal to a devotee of God. It is sometimes addressed by him as masculine, feminine or neuter— He, She or It—according to his liking. The devotee's conception may be of the form of Goddess Durga, or Kali; or it may be Natarāja or Lord Visnu; but always the principle is that the worshipper is helped towards the discovery of Inner Truth and realization of the Divine Reality. The genius of the Hindu mind lies after all in its hankering to transcend this world of matter and appearances to find the deeper truth. Liberality in religious forms and tolerance of other faiths are glorious but are secondary adjuncts.

5. Ananda Coomaraswami, *The Dance of Shiva* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1948) p. 94.

6. Fritzof Capra, *The Tao of Physics* (London: Fontana-Collins, 1976) pp. 256-58.

7. Heinz R. Pagels, *The Cosmic Code* (New York: Bantam Books, 1984) p. 312.

Miss Noble Into Sister Nivedita

MAMATA RAY

Prof. Mamata Ray sheds light on many factors which brought about the salutary changes in Margaret Noble transforming her into the fully blossomed personality of Sister Nivedita. The author, who is a frequent contributor, is a lecturer in Political Science at Viswa Bharati University, Santiniketan, West Bengal.

While it is true that Margaret Noble would never have become Sister Nivedita if she had not met Swami Vivekananda "on a cold Sunday afternoon"¹ in November 1895 in London, it would be a distortion of history to say that the transformation took place overnight. The metamorphosis of Margaret Noble was gradual, even tortuous. The purpose of this article is to relate how the year 1895-1896, featuring several discourses in London given by Swami Vivekananda attended by Margaret Noble, marked the beginning of this transformation of Margaret Noble into one of India's greatest friends and faithful servants at the turn of the twentieth century.

I

As has been narrated in the previous article, Margaret Noble was born into a religious family and she herself was very religiously inclined. But at the same time she was distinctly an independent type, and averse to accepting things unquestioningly. Her independence and high spirits often came into conflict with her religious sensibilities. At the age of ten she clashed with her headmistress who always dwelt on sins and insisted on her young pupils' atoning for such imaginary sins. Margaret felt considerably pained at her admonitions and interpretation of Christian doctrine. How can human beings be looked upon as miserable sinners? The more she would brood over the question, the more repulsive the fundamentalist interpretations would seem to her. She was too

young to revolt against such fare at that time but the foreboding was already there that she would someday refuse to have anything to do with such unenlightened religious teachings. To her it was anything but truth. How can there be *truth* where there is no freedom?

Eager to find the truth which she believed lay in freedom, Margaret joined at the age of fifteen the Tractarian movement, which aimed at ensuring the freedom and dignity of the Church, *vis a vis* an all-absorbing State. Her initial enthusiasm in espousing the cause of "free" domain for the church, however, soon evaporated when she found too much rigidity and illiberality. Refusing to be regimented in such a movement, she "regained" her personal freedom by leaving. She would not stay and be suffocated by something quite alien to her basic nature.

Persisting in her quest for truth and freedom, she joined later what she supposed to be an open-minded group within the Church of England. In this venture too she was disappointed. The group she soon found was charged with cynicism and intolerance, which entailed for her the very negation of her concept of freedom.

Her disappointment with religious organizations and Church authorities turned into despair during her teachership at Wrexham in 1886-1889, when she found the Church authorities more sectarian than humanitarian in their approach to the service of the poor and the needy. She took to battle against this sectarianism of the Church to the pages of newspapers and journals.

1. *The Complete Works of Sister Nivedita* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1982) Vol. I, p. 17.

Margaret's mental separation from conservative Christianity was now almost complete. It was the end-result of a series of disappointments. Then a vacuum existed in her mind (a vacuum which was all the more agony to her due to the death of the man she loved during her years at Wrexham). In order to find mental peace, Margaret began to search for an answer to questions and the fundamental "wherefore" of things. She tried Christianity over the years and found herself still in need of something. She tried the natural sciences and did not find them very adequate either. Finally she took up the study of Buddhism and was happy to note that Buddha talked not in terms of sins and atonement, but in terms of relieving the sufferings of human beings. Her questing soul was, however, not yet satisfied. She was not yet fully convinced that she had found what she was searching for.

When such was the state of her mind, an invitation came her way one day to meet a "Hindu Swami" who had made a name for himself at the Parliament of Religions held in Chicago in September, 1893. How could she know at the time she accepted the invitation that the Swami was to become the beacon light of her life and lead her to the truth and freedom that she had so long been seeking.

In a lecture entitled "How and Why I Adopted the Hindu Religion" delivered at the Hindu Ladies Social club in Bombay in 1902, Nivedita herself describes this phase of her life. The lecture deserves to be quoted in part for its candidness and the light it throws on Margaret Noble's life:

I was born and bred an Englishwoman and up to the age of eighteen ... I devotedly worshipped the child Jesus ... But after the age of eighteen I began to harbour doubts as to the truth of some of the Christian doctrines. Many of them began to seem to me false and incompatible with truth. These doubts grew stronger and stronger and at the same time my faith in Chris-

tianity tottered more and more. For seven years I was in this wavering state of mind, very unhappy, and yet, very very eager to seek the Truth.

During the seven years of wavering it occurred to me that in the study of natural science I should surely find the truth I was seeking ... but it made the doctrines of the Christian religion seem all the more inconsistent. Just then I happened to get a life of Buddha, and I became more and more convinced that the salvation he preached was decidedly more consistent with the truth than the preachings of the Christian religion.

And now came the turning point for my faith. A cousin of your great Viceroy Lord Ripon invited me to have tea with him and to meet there a great Swami from India who, he said, might perhaps help the search my soul was longing for. The Swami I met here was none other than Swami Vivekananda, who afterwards became my Guru and whose teachings have given relief my doubting spirit had been longing for so long.²

If we take a second look at this statement of Sister Nivedita, we can observe four things:

(a) She was a follower of Christianity up to the age of eighteen. This statement needs some qualification. As has been shown, her unhappiness with some of her Christian experiences began as early as the age of ten, a logical culmination of which was her mental separation from Christian organizations around the age of eighteen. That is to say, she began to harbour doubts about her life and religion long before she reached the age of eighteen. The process which was already on for quite some years became only prominent since she reached the age mentioned in her lecture.

(b) For seven years since the age of eighteen, Margaret Noble was wavering in her

2. *Ibid.*, Vol. II, pp. 160-61

religious conviction, during which time she began to enquire into fundamental questions, the fundamental wherefore of things from the study of natural sciences. This, if anything, made her all the more dissatisfied with her life.

(c) For the next three years, i.e. till the age of twenty-eight she got absorbed in the study of Buddhism which afforded her some pleasure and something more satisfying than her Christian life had been to her. The search, however, was still on.

(d) Her doubting spirit got some relief when she met Swami Vivekananda in London in 1895-1896. To her, it must have been like seeing the light at the end of a long and dark tunnel.

The light she saw, however was dim at first. Only gradually it became bright and clear. The first meetings between Margaret Noble and Swami Vivekananda were more of the nature of "encounters" between a "doubting spirit" and an "enlightened soul". In order to understand the true nature of these encounters or what was given and how Margaret reacted, we must give in some detail the accounts of these meetings. But before that, a word or two about Swami Vivekananda.

II

Swami Vivekananda had left India to attend the Parliament of Religions held in Chicago in 1893. He immediately became famous in America due to his direct and simple, yet profound oratory. His thesis struck the Chicago assembly deeply because even though he spoke as a representative of the Hindu religion, unlike representatives of other religions, he did not address the parliament with an attitude of superiority. His was a universal message which appealed to the hearts of the people. He openly and warmly acknowledged the truth and importance of all the religions represented in the Parliament, and said that though there is one Divine Being who is worshipped in a thousand different forms and names, this should not be the cause of bad feeling, quarrel or divisive

spirit among the various religions. After all, the world religions represented a single truth even though the symbols they used were a thousand in number. To quote Swami Vivekananda:

The whole world of religions is only travelling, a coming up, of different men and women, through various conditions and circumstances, to the same goal. Every religion is only evolving a God out of the material man, and the same God is the inspirer of all of them.³

If the central truth of every religion consists in evolving a God out of man, in recognizing divinity in every man and woman and in aiding humanity to realize its own true, divine nature, then, Swami Vivekananda asked, where is the scope for intolerance, sectarianism, bigotry and its horrible descendant, fanaticism which, in the so-called name of religions, has long taken possession of the earth? Thus, Swami Vivekananda's message at the Parliament of Religions was for tolerance, acceptance and harmony. What made him and his message unique among others at the Parliament, and what struck his American 'brothers and sisters' most was his plea, not for the triumph of any one of the religions over others, or their destruction, but his plea for keeping realization central in all religions. He said, the aim of religion is to help "man become divine by realizing the divine". He referred to Hinduism as the "mother of all religions" because "the whole religion of the Hindu is centred in *realization*".⁴ (Emphasis added). "The Hindu religion does not consist in struggles and attempts to believe a certain doctrine or dogma, but in realizing—not in believing, but in being and becoming."⁵

In proclaiming the virtues of Hinduism, did Swami Vivekananda mean to convert others to his own beliefs, as is the wont of religious preachers in general? The answer is an emphatic no. That was contrary to the whole message of Swami Vivekananda, contrary to the catholicity

3. *Chicago Addresses* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama. 1968) p. 34.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 31.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 24.

of spirit which he exhibited at the Parliament of Religions at Chicago. "The Christian is not to become a Hindu or a Buddhist, nor a Hindu or a Buddhist to become a Christian. But each must assimilate the spirit of the others and yet preserve his individuality and *grow according to his own law of growth*."⁶

'Assimilate, but grow according to your own law of growth', represents one aspect of Swami Vivekananda's doctrine of freedom. How is one to assimilate, yet retain his own individuality? Well, this is to be done the way a seed does it. The seed, put into the ground, assimilates nourishment from air, the earth and water, but does not become either or all of them. It converts what it assimilates into plant substance and grows into a plant.

The other aspect of Swami Vivekananda's doctrine of freedom holds that the soul is divine, but it is held in the bondage of matter. The bondage of matter represents *Maya*, the enchantment of the world. So long as the soul is enveloped by *Maya* it is not free. The attainment of freedom consists in bursting such bondage. Freedom so to say, means freedom from doubt, "freedom from death and misery", and release from the bonds of imperfection.⁷ In a word, according to Swami Vivekananda, to realize freedom means to develop according to the laws of one's own individual spiritual nature and innate capacity.

These two complementary aspects of Swami Vivekananda's doctrine of freedom are essential for an understanding of Margaret Noble's transformation into Sister Nivedita.

III

On the eve of her first meeting with Swami Vivekananda, Margaret Noble suffered from deep personal and spiritual loneliness. "Her exterior life—her profession, the social and politi-

cal friendships on which at twenty-nine she might well be proud—could not fill the gulf in her soul."⁸ Margaret did not realize at that time, in that state of her mental despair, that more than anything else what she needed at the moment in her search for truth and spirituality was *freedom*, the sense of buoyancy, and self-assurance that comes only after one comes into contact with one's spiritual destiny. "Cut off the bonds of imperfection and elevate yourself to divinity according to your own true nature," Swami Vivekananda had said. If these words of his counted to her more than anything else, it was because they enabled her to trace the soul within her, which seemed to be lost to her at the time. No wonder that the great Swami who had ended her groping in darkness and illumined her way was soon accepted by her as Guru. But as we have pointed out, this acceptance could not be instantaneous. It came slowly and gradually, and because it was so we should trace as closely as we can the early moments of her conversion when she met the Swami.

Despite the fame Swami Vivekananda earned in America, he was not very widely known in England and was referred to in the press as merely 'a Hindu Swami in London' during his visit to the city in October-November, 1895. Lady Isabel Margesson arranged a lecture⁹ for the Swami in her own house before an intimate gathering of her friends and acquaintances (fifteen or sixteen in number) of whom Margaret was one. Margaret came to the meeting more out of curiosity than anything else, "to hear a Hindu Swami speak".¹⁰

8. Lizelle Reymond, *The Dedicated* (Madras: Samata Books, 1935) p. 31.

9. Swamiji's first lecture in London was delivered at the Princes' Hall on October 22, 1895. Margaret was obviously not present on this occasion as she records in her book that she first met Swamiji in Lady Margesson's place in November 1895. See Pravrajika Atmaprana, *Sister Nivedita* (Calcutta: Sister Nivedita Girls' School, 1977) p. 12.

10. Reymond, p. 32

6. *Ibid.*, p. 49.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 23.

What did Swami say to this select group? He spoke on a wide variety of subjects. He made the point that the need for an exchange of ideals between nations, especially between the East and the West, was even greater than the customary exchange of market commodities between them. He elucidated the idea of Hindu "Pan-Theism". He observed that there was but One, even though that One's manifestations were many. He held that love of God and love of man was rightly extolled as the highest religious emotion in both Hinduism and Christianity. He spoke of the infinite power of man, and of *Yoga*—Karma, Bhakti and Jnana, the three paths which lead the human soul to the knowledge of God. With a touch of humour he observed somewhat critically that "it was well to be born in a church, but it was terrible to die there." What he meant by this was that it was not any specific faith, but self-realization which constitutes the essence of religion. And he declared the one message of all religions lies in the call to renunciation.¹¹ Finally, he held that it is the soul, which transcends both the body and mind, and that the goal of individual life lies in the attainment of the freedom of the Soul.

How was the message of Swami received by his audience? "It was not new", or "There was not much of originality in Swamiji's pronouncements", or "All that he has said has been said by other people many times before" were the kind of expressions with which the Swamiji's message was received by the people present, and this surely included Margaret Noble as well who was, more than anybody else, suffering at that time from a kind of scepticism. Writing ten years later as to the reason for coldness or indifference, and also possibly stubborn pride with which Swamiji's audience reacted; Margaret wrote that it was a difficult audience, chosen in the first place for their sceptical attitudes — an audience which came to the meeting

psychologically pre-disposed to a sort of resistance to whatever the Hindu Yogi might have had to say.—To quote her,

We were not very orthodox, or open to belief, we who had come to meet the Hindu Yogi, as he was called in London at that time... Most of us had, I incline to think, been singled out for the afternoon's hospitality, on the very score of our unwillingness to believe, for the difficulty of convincing us. ...Only this habit...can, as I now think, furnish any excuse for the coldness and pride with which we all gave our private verdicts on the speaker at the end of our visit.¹²

Whatever verdict Margaret Noble might have passed in a hurry about Swamiji's lecture, her conscience was far from easy in dismissing in such a crude fashion the message of a new mind: "It occurred to me that though each separate *dictum* might find its echo or its fellow amongst things already heard or already thought, yet it had never before fallen to my lot to meet with a thinker who in one short hour had been able to express all that I had hitherto regarded as highest and best. I therefore took the only two opportunities that remained to me, of hearing the Swamiji's lectures while he was still in London".¹³

The lectures referred to in Nivedita's writings were delivered by Swamiji on the 16th and the 23rd of November, 1895. Swamiji left England for America in November itself, but returned to London in April 1896 and continued his discourses, meeting as many as four times his followers. Lizelle Reymond points out that ... "Friday was the day set apart for questions. Margaret would submit the Swami each time to a veritable cross-examination which the rest of the audience followed with growing interest. Her clear voice invariably began the bombardment: "Excuse me, Swamiji, but you said that..." and a passionate discussion [would] ensue."¹⁴ The purpose of such cross-examination

11. *The Complete Works of Sister Nivedita*, "The Master As I Saw Him" Vol.I. p. 19.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 20.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 21.

14. Reymond, p. 45.

was for Margaret to be as clear as possible about what Swamiji was saying. The more she questioned, the more she became convinced of the soundness of what the Swami preached. And, as Barbara Foxe points out, with every meeting she attended she "came nearer" to Swami Vivekananda."¹⁵

IV

What was the highest and best that Margaret Noble identified in Swami Vivekananda's thoughts through attending his lectures delivered in London in 1895 and 1896 through her studious reflections on what she heard? More than any newness of thought that Swami Vivekananda brought to the fore, Margaret was impressed by the breadth of his religious culture, by the fact that Swamiji "took his stand on what was noblest and best in us, the fact that his call was sounded in name of that which was strongest and finest, and was not in any way dependent on the meaner elements in man."¹⁶

As regards his breadth, Margaret writing ten years later as Sister Nivedita, noted down:

Neither then, nor at any aftertime, did I ever hear him advocate to his audience any specialized form of religion. He would refer freely enough to the Indian sects—or as I would like to call them 'Churches'—by way of illustration of what he had to say. But he never preached anything but that philosophy which, to Indian thinking, underlies all creeds.¹⁷

Since religion, to Swamiji, was a matter of realization and not mere belief in any 'faith' or

sect in the conventional sense of the term, he upheld "the perfect freedom of every soul to be itself"¹⁸ to realize for itself the truth of the "Immanent God"¹⁹. And where is the God? Is he in the Heaven? No, He is in the temple of the human body itself, in the soul of man himself. "He is in our own hearts. Thou art He, O man! Thou art He!"²⁰

How was the freedom of the realized soul to be attained? Often Swamiji's one-word answer to this question was that freedom is to be attained through renunciation. All the three great paths of *Jnana*, *Bhakti* and *Karma* (Knowledge, love and disinterested work) required renunciation on the part of the questing soul. Man must grow continually into Pure Consciousness. Transcending the body and lower order of consciousness, he can attain spiritual consciousness only by refusing to be ruled by desires, by the ego, by the body, by the emotions. Why is the body to be transcended? Because the body represents the *Maya*, the seat of man's attachment to the sensory existence. We are in *Maya*, in bondage, we are in slavery so long as we inordinately crave for the satisfaction of the senses. In order to attain the freedom of the realized soul we must grow by consciousness given by renunciation, *out of Maya into the Self*. To be into the self is to know the immanence of God—*So'ham, So'ham*, I am He; I am He. From *Maya* into the Self through renunciation—these three concepts represent the whole of Swamiji's philosophy of life as well as of religion.

Giving her own understanding of swamiji's philosophy of life and religion in the perspectives of *Maya*, *Self*, and *Renunciation*, Sister Nivedita wrote:

By *Maya* thus meant that shimmering, elusive, half-real, half-unreal complexity, in which there is no rest, no satisfaction, no ultimate certainty, of which we become

15. Barbara Foxe, *Long Journey Home* (London: Riderand Co., 1975), p. 26. Philosophical enlightenment apart, these frequent meetings helped Margaret develop a good personal rapport with Swamiji, enabling her to tell him of her personal problems, her educational and even political activities. According to Lizelle Reymond, "When Margaret showed him her school, he wept with joy." (p. 48). The thought of having someone as dedicated as Margaret to work for the education of poor children and women of India must have crossed his mind at that time. It was only a matter of some gap in time before such an invitation from Swamiji came her way.

16. *The complete works of Sister Nivedita* Vol. I, p. 24.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 25.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 7

19. *Ibid.*, p. 25

20. *Ibid.*, p. 26.

aware through the senses, and through the mind as dependent on the senses. At the same time—"And *That* by which all this is pervaded, know *That* to be the Lord Himself!" In these two conceptions, placed side by side, we have the whole theology of Hinduism as presented by Swami Vivekananda in the West.²¹

Giving her own slightly extended interpretation of Swamiji's philosophy of renunciation, Sister Nivedita observes that by renunciation, Swamiji actually meant 'conquest' of ease, sustained and determined effort, absorption in hard problems through lonely hours, and the achievement of mastery not just in the field of religion but in any field of life. It means 'taking life as a battlefield rather than a ballroom. "To him," as Sister Nivedita writes of Swami Vivekananda, "the workshop, the study, the farmyard and the field are as true and fit scenes for the meeting of God with man as the cell of monk or the door of the temple".²²

Stephenson, who by sustained toil and refusal of ease, invented the steam engine, was as great in his own way as any saint or monk worth the name, in religion. Swamiji thus said (in the urgency of the moment for rousing up India), "Make no distinction, henceforth, between sacred and secular. To labour is to pray. To conquer is to renounce." One final comment that Nivedita makes reveals her own philosophy of life in a better light than any she could have written to express :

Towards the end of his life I told him that renunciation was the only word I had ever heard from his lips. And yet in truth I think, that "conquer" was much more characteristic of him.²³

Commenting on Margaret Noble's perception of the philosophy of Swami Vivekananda, Lizelle Reymond observes :

... in this philosophy Margaret perceived all the efforts, mutually subordinated, that she had made upto that time, all the development, she had passed through in her religious experience. A new light shown upon her life, revealing to her all its difficulties and un hoped-for openings.²⁴

21. *Ibid.*, pp. 27-28.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 9.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 28.

24. Reymond, p. 46.

Margaret Noble's initiation into her new thought-world begun in 1895, had progressed a lot indeed by 1896. She was now deeply attracted by the personality of Swami Vivekananda and could not but do obeisance to the character of a man who placed the cultivation of strength and character above everything else.²⁵ It was the heroic fibre of the Swami that could but compel her admiration. Also, she could not but be astounded to see the breadth of his religious culture and experience. While other religious teachers known to her would claim finality for what they spoke or stood for, Swami Vivekananda was completely unlike them. "Although he had a system of thought to offer, nothing in that system would claim him for a moment, if he found that truth led elsewhere. And to the extent that this recognition implies," wrote Margaret years later, "I became his disciple."²⁶

It is a further measure of the breadth of Swami Vivekananda's religious culture that he sounded his call in the name of all that was strongest, finest and noblest in man, and never in the name of sectarianism, bigotry or fanaticism or, so to say, the meaner elements in man. He taught both tolerance and universal acceptance as well as the validity of all religious paths. He taught that each soul is potentially divine and that human beings should be viewed,

25. To quote Nivedita, "And above all, he preached that character, and character alone, was the power that determined the permanence of a religious wave. Resistance was to his mind the duty of the citizen, non-resistance of the monk. And this, because, for all, the supreme achievement was strength." *The complete Works of Sister Nivedita* Vol. I, 28. Another western disciple of Swamiji wrote of him, "His whole purpose was, not to make things easy for us, but to teach us how to develop our innate strength. 'Strength ! Strength!' he cried. 'I preach nothing but strength. That is why I preach the Upanishads.' ...His attitude had the effect of a tonic. Something long dormant was aroused, and with it came strength and freedom." Quoted from Barbara Foxe, p. 26.

26. *The Complete works of Sister Nivedita* vol. I. p. 22.

not as sinners, but as divinities on earth.²⁷ Yes, divinities! Because man has the god-like power within himself to raise himself above the world to a pure life. Once Swamiji gave an illustration: Ordinarily a woman who is a mother would be frightened away from a place by the sight of a tiger. "But suppose," he said, with a sudden change of tone, "suppose there were a baby in the path of tiger! Where would your place be then? At his mouth—any one of you I am sure of it."²⁸ The point of his illustration was that human beings—children of God, of course, and not sinners, are capable of supreme sacrifices, and being motivated by love entailing total selflessness. That kind of conscious elevation of the human soul to the noblest and best that is already in us, was, to Swami Vivekananda, religion in the highest sense of the term—*realization*, or so to say, *the freedom of the realized soul*.

The one thing that man is struggling for is the freedom of his soul. He is always seeking to burst the bondage of his imperfections, his Maya, so to say, without perhaps even being aware of it. But the struggle he must carry on, till by continuous conquest of the meaner ele-

ment of him, he realizes the noblest and best in himself. As Swami Vivekananda proclaimed, "All our struggle is for Freedom, we seek neither misery nor happiness but Freedom, Freedom alone."²⁹

V

Could Margaret Noble struggling for freedom, for complete self-expression of the essential perfection within her, ignore the call of a man who took his stand always, as she says, "on what was noblest and best in us"? She obviously could not. Because Swami Vivekananda represented in his person that thing, that freedom steeped with selfless love, which she had been searching for right from her childhood. No wonder that before Swamiji left the West on his return for India towards the end of 1896, Margaret Noble addressed him as "Master" and expressed her desire to make herself "*the servant of his love for his people*."³⁰

Margaret Noble found in Swami Vivekananda what she was seeking. Her real career had now just started. Giving her candid acknowledgement that she could never have been what she became later had she not met Swami Vivekananda in London in 1895, she wrote

27. In response to Margaret Noble's query as to what was his ideal, Swami Vivekananda wrote a very illuminating letter to her from his London address on June, 1896:

"Dear Miss Noble, My ideal can be put into a few words, and that is: to preach unto mankind their divinity, and how to make it manifest in every movement of life. ...Let us call and call till the sleeping gods awake, till the god within answers to the call." As a matter of fact, Swamiji meant by 'yoga' the union of the 'god within' with the 'god outside', i.e. the union of the soul of man with the whole universe. Comparable is Rabindranath's singing to the following effect: "*Visvasathe yoge jethay biharol seikhanele jog tomar sathe amaro*." (My union with thee takes place at the point where thou meet with the whole universe.) In Swamiji's system of thought, yoga, divinity, renunciation and freedom are all inter-linked concepts. Yoga leads to divinity and freedom. Renunciation is the method of attaining yoga, divinity, and freedom. Renunciation in this sense means the abnegation of the self, i.e. the meaner elements as represented by the ego of man, and the cultivation of Self, i.e. the best and noble elements in the innate divine nature of man, leading to the union of the human soul with the cosmic

soul. Man's true freedom lies in developing his nature to the level of divinity. As Swamiji said in one of his greatest lectures before his London audience (which included Margaret Noble, for certain): "That ideal of freedom that you perceived was correct but you projected it outside yourself and that was your mistake. Bring it nearer and nearer, until you find that it was all the time within you, it was the self of your own self. That freedom was your own nature...not only to see it intellectually, but to perceive it, actualize it, much more definitely than we perceive this world. Then we shall know that we are free." (See Barbara Foxe, p. 29) Central to Swamiji's system of thought was such realization. Whether he talked of yoga or of religion or divinity or renunciation or freedom, he drove always essentially at this kind of realization on the part of the human soul. If there is any one word which holds the key to Swami Vivekananda's system of thought, it is *realization*.

28. *The Complete Works of Sister Nivedita*, Vol I. p. 2.4

29. Quoted in Reymond, p. 34

30. *The complete Works of Sister Nivedita*, Vol I, p. 22

Technology Alternatives For The Use Of Rice Husks

PROF. P. K. MEHTA

Continuing in his illustrated paper begun in our January issue, Prof. Mehta gives more on the technology of producing construction cement economically and efficiently using the agricultural by-product, rice husks. There is no gainsaying, it could prove a boon to India's developing housing projects. The article is the outcome of the author's research in 'materials' at the University of California's Civil Engineering Department, Berkeley, U.S.A.

In his book, *Good Work*, the late E.F. Schumacher described his dream of mini-cement plants for providing cement to the rural poor in developing countries; this dream can be fulfilled by introducing appropriate technologies for the manufacture of pozzolan cements. For instance, pozzolan cements from rice husk ash (RHA) can be made at a surprisingly small scale and low cost, provided that the science of these cements and the socio-economic aspects of the technology alternatives are properly understood. These points are covered in this review of the pozzolan cements and technologies for making RHA cements.

Pozzolans and Pozzolan Cements

Chemical reactions which lead to the formation of calcium silicate hydrates are the basis of cementitious properties in water-resisting mortars and concretes used for construction purposes. Mortars and concretes in ancient Greece and Rome were made by mixing lime and volcanic ash which served as a source of reactive silica. Named after the town of Puzzuoli near Mt. Vesuvius, such reactive silica materials are called pozzolanas or pozzolans.

According to the American Society of Testing and Materials, pozzolans are defined as siliceous, or siliceous and aluminous, materials which in themselves possess little or no cementitious value but will, in finely divided form and in the presence of moisture, chemically react with calcium hydroxide at ordinary tempera-

tures to form compounds possessing cementitious properties.

Many natural and industrial materials possess pozzolanic properties such as volcanic ash, diatomaceous earth, calcined clay or shale, and fly ash produced by the combustion of pulverized coal. In general, the rate at which a pozzolan can react with calcium hydroxide at ordinary temperature is dependent on silica content, crystallinity of silica, and surface area of the material. Amorphous or non-crystalline silica is most reactive, whereas crystalline forms of silica show only a little reactivity to lime. Generally, the lime-pozzolan cements contain 20 to 30 per cent lime by weight.

Modern pozzolan cement is generally made by blending portland cement with a pozzolan. When compared to lime-pozzolan mixtures, Portland-pozzolan mixture develop higher strengths, and at a much faster rate, even when the pozzolanic material is of low reactivity. However, these properties are not essential for small-scale building and since portland cement is expensive and generally unavailable to the rural poor whereas lime may be less expensive and relatively easily made from local limestone, it may be assumed that lime-pozzolan cements can be a feasible alternative in many areas of developing countries. In this context, it is important to note that if satisfactory and consistent setting and hardening properties are desired, the use of a pozzolan with high pozzolanic activity is more important in the case of lime-pozzolan

cements than in Portland-pozzolan cement since lime itself is not cementitious.

Technologies for converting Rice Husks to Cement

Rice husks contain about 40 per cent cellulose, 30 per cent lignin, and 25 to 30 per cent hydrated silica which is present in non-crystalline form. Although cellulose and lignin can be separated from the silica by chemical extraction, combustion is a more economical method. The method of burning is the key to the production of RHA with high pozzolanic activity. Another consideration is the importance of recovering energy as a by-product of the process, since 3,500 cal/g heat energy is released on combustion of rice husks.

The US Technology

Experiments by the author at the University of California in the early 1970s showed that the silica in RHA can be maintained in a highly pozzolanic state if the temperature of combustion is kept below 700°C and if the ash is not held too long at the high temperature. The ash, consisting mostly of silica, was found to be completely amorphous, porous, and easy to grind. The surface area of the lightly ground product was 55m²/kg, and it became the basis of production of both lime-pozzolan-type cements possessing excellent strength and durability characteristics. (Recently, concrete cylinders made six years ago with Portland RHA cement containing 35 per cent ash by weight showed compressive strengths on the order of 80 Mpa or 816 kg/cm² after continuous exposure to a moist environment, as compared with 60 Mpa or 612 Kg/cm² for the control concrete made with Portland cement only.)

In the USA, huge piles of husks near centralized rice-milling areas present a serious waste disposal problem. Based on the scientific work at the University of California, Pitt designed an air-suspension furnace which converted rice husks into a highly pozzolanic ash. Since energy recovery rather than the initial

plant cost is of more interest to US entrepreneurs, the 1/4-tons and 7-tons per hour rice-husk-burning furnaces installed respectively in California and Arkansas were equipped with boilers for making steam. Also, due to the great demand for the acid-resisting cements in the US, only Portland cement-based RHA cements were produced. Thus, the economic viability of this capital-intensive technology is made possible through the efficient recovery of heat energy as steam despite the high selling price of the high-strength acid-resisting cement needed in the construction of floors and walls in meat-processing, fertilizer, and chemical plants.

Based on the Mehta and Pitt process, a 1-ton per hour rice-husk-burning air-suspension furnace with a boiler is currently under installation in Malaysia.

Technologies Developed in India and Pakistan

A process for making cement by intergrinding lime and crystalline RHA, obtained from uncontrolled burning in parboilers, was reported by Dr. P. Kapoor of the Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur. At the first UNIDO/ESCAP/ RCTT workshop on RHA Cement in Pakistan a manufacturer of this cement, called Ashmoh, stated that the ash was difficult to grind and the cements were of low strength failing, at times, to set and harden. Subsequent work at the Cement Research Institute of India (CRI) has shown that the energy consumption rate for grinding the crystalline RHA from parboilers to a specific fineness was about twice the rate for grinding the amorphous RHA from the controlled incineration process. Also, the lime reactivity values showed a gradual decrease from 160 to less than 20 kg/cm² from the amorphous to the parboiler RHA.

A modification of the IIT, Kanpur process involves the use of Portland cement, instead of lime. For intergrinding crystalline RHA and Portland cement, a 3 tons per day capacity unit is in commercial operation at Kurukshetra, India. The crystalline RHA is produced by an open-field burning operation.

The Central Building Research Institute of India developed a process in which the heat produced by the combustion of rice husks was used to calcine limestone, and the product pulverized into a cementitious material. Since the calcination of limestone to lime requires temperatures in excess of 900°C, the RHA becomes crystalline and, therefore, of little value as a pozzolan. No commercial application of the process is reported. The Pakistan Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (PCSIR) produced amorphous RHA by overnight combustion of rice husks in used oil drums which were fitted with chimneys in order to obtain a good air draft and to keep the combustion temperature low. The experimental cements produced by intergrinding the ash with lime gave a significantly lower strength than Portland cement, but the product was considered adequate for use as a masonry cement.

A CRI development was a 300 kg/day incinerator to make amorphous RHA, which is interground with 40 to 50 per cent hydrated lime by weight to produce a masonry cement capable of giving about 10 Mpa (102 kg/cm²) strength at 28 days. A 3-ton/day unit is in commercial operation in Haryana, with a cost similar to that of the Kurukshetra plant. An undesirable feature of both the PCSIR and CRI incinerators is that the heat energy produced is completely wasted.

Rice Husks as Fuel for Cooking.

In the major rice-growing countries such as China, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam, rice husks have been used for centuries as a cooking fuel in households and small hotels. The portable domestic cooker used in India (called *angithi*) and Bali for burning either rice husks or compacted sawdust as fuel, consists of a cylindrical sheet-metal container lined with clay. It is usually about 12 inches in diameter and of similar height. Two pieces of wood, one placed horizontally at the bottom and the other placed vertically in the middle of the cylinder, provide an ingenious method of getting air for combus-

tion. When the cooker is packed to the top with rice husks, the pieces of wood are gently removed, thereby leaving behind vents for air. The *angithi* normally costs about Rs. 55/.

The cooker used in hotels in India (called *bhatti*) and the Philippines is constructed indoors in the form of a rectangular chamber of about 6 x 4 x 3 ft made from either fireclay or sheet-metal lined with fireclay. Rice husks are fed in at the top at one end while the smoke is removed through a roof-top chimney at the other end. An inclined cast-iron grate (Fig. 1) is used to draw combustion air by natural draft. The ash accumulates at the bottom and is periodically removed by means of a manual stoker. Ash derived from these burning operations in Asia consists mainly of crystalline silica and contains considerable amounts of carbon and even unburnt husks, and is invariably wasted. The cost of construction of the cooker is about Rs. 1,800/- . It is capable of continuous operation and can handle two to four large cooking pots.

An Evaluation of the Available Technology Alternatives.

From the standpoint of strength and durability characteristics of product, consistency of quality, utilization of the maximum potential of the raw material (both as a source of energy and a highly pozzolanic ash), and economic viability, the technology developed in the United States has proved to be sound. The capital costs, however, may keep it beyond the reach of many entrepreneurs in developing countries.

The technologies developed at IIT and the Central Building Research Institute of India would require much less capital investment, but do not make scientific and economic sense because they permit the conversion of a highly valuable form of silica present in the rice husk into a virtually useless ash composed of crystalline silica. Crystalline silica requires considerable energy expenditure (prolonged ball-milling) to develop some pozzolanic ac-

tivity; even then, the cements produced are low in strength. They may be used for ordinary plastering and masonry work in building construction but strict quality control will have to be exercised; a difficult job when there is large variation in the quality of RHA such as par-boiler or field-burnt ash. The main drawback of the CRI and PCSIR processes is that the heat energy potential of rice husks is totally wasted.

Although the idea of recovering heat energy and making cement from rice husks has great potential for the developing countries, none of the available technologies appears to meet the requirements of the most needy in these countries. These people have nothing to invest, so how can they buy ball mills for grinding cement, or pay for the manufactured product to improve their housing conditions? Another consideration is the time spent in rural areas gathering firewood for domestic cooking.

From the above it follows that, ideally, the RHA cement technology appropriate to the needs of the people in developing countries should not only be inexpensive but people-oriented. It should be able to provide pozzolanic ash for making cement of consistent and high quality, at the same time satisfying people's needs for a readily available source of domestic fuel. With this object in mind, first at Berkelay and later at the Centre for Application of Science and Technology to Rural Areas (ASTRA), Institute of Science, Bangalore, the author developed an inexpensive cooker which uses rice husks as fuel and produces a non-crystalline silica ash. This cooker, described below, is somewhat similar in operation to the Indian *tandoor*.

Design and Operation of the Tandoor-type Rice Husk Cooker.

The cooker consists essentially of two parts, namely a ring and a removable lid with a spout in the middle which serves as a vent for smoke. The parts can be easily made from fired-clay by a village potter; or a mason can fabricate them from ferrocement. From the standpoint of safe thermal load (to keep silica in the amorphous

state) the maximum diameter of the ring was fixed at 15", and the height at 6". Adequate insulation against heat loss can be provided if the wall thickness is half an inch or more. As shown in Fig. 2, the ring and cover assembly is placed on a 3 mm wire-mesh screen which rests on top of two bricks. As rice husks produce a dense smoke during evolution of the volatile matter, the cooker is best suited for outdoor operation.

Rice husks are difficult to ignite. Once ignited, they burn in two stages. In the first stage, the volatile matter is removed in the form of bluish dense smoke. The brownish residue left behind is called char, which contains unburnt carbon from cellulose. The heat for cooking food is derived from the combustion of char to ash.

In order to start ignition of husks, dry leaves and grass are piled under the wire-mesh and are lighted after the ring (without the lid) is loaded with husks to a depth of about 1" only. When the colour turns from yellow to brown, more husks are added and the process is repeated until the ring is full of char; about 2 kg of husks are needed for this. Meanwhile, when the charring process is underway, about 1/2 litre of rice is soaked in 1 litre water in a 7" diameter earthenware pot, and 1/4 litre of lentils or beans are soaked in a similar quantity of water in another pot. The two-pot assembly (Fig.2) is inserted in the middle of the ring as soon as it is full of char. The ring is then covered with the lid; cooking time is about two hours. The quantity of food is adequate for a family of three to four persons. The food in the cooker can keep warm for several hours after the char has fully burnt. A local potter in the Bangalore area sold the fired clay-ring and lid assembly for Rs. 9/-, and earthenware cooking pots for Rs 4/-, thus the entire cooking system including the wire-mesh costs about Rs. 15/-.

Due to low heat-mass and small bed-thickness, the measured temperature in the cooker did not exceed 600°C. Each 2 kg batch of husks produced about 400 g ash which contained 2 to

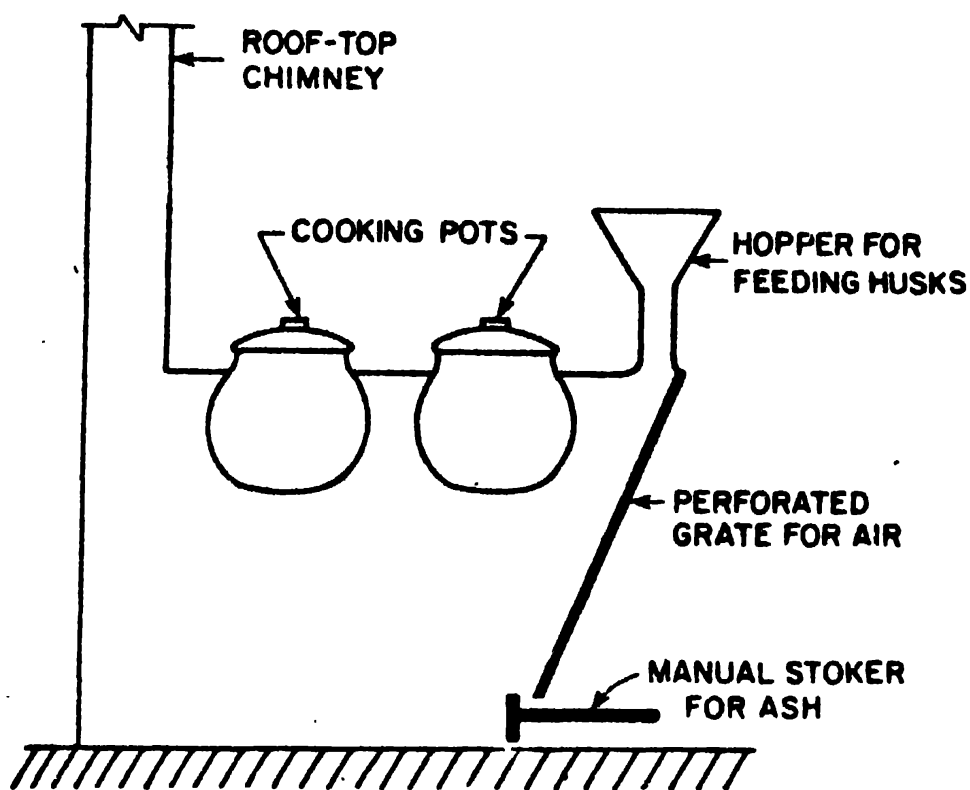


Fig 1 Bhatti-type indoor rice-husk cooker

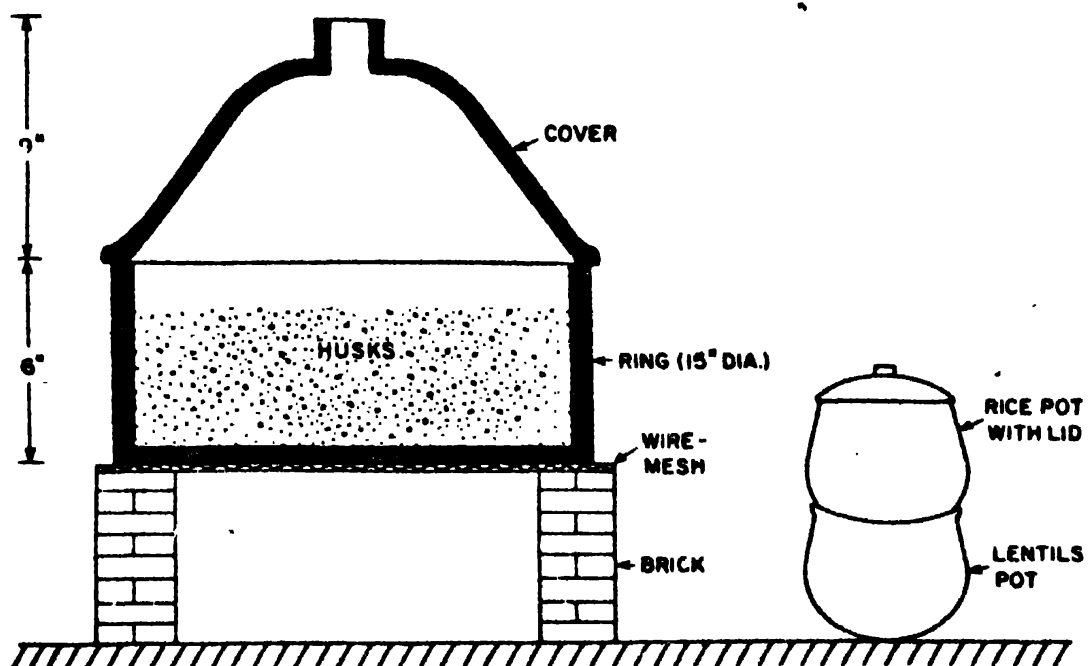


Fig 1 Tandoor-type outdoor rice-husk cooker

4 per cent carbon, the rest being essentially silica. The absence of large diffraction peaks in the tandoor ash confirms that silica therein was essentially non-crystalline. The ash was soft and could be ground easily into a high surface-area product using a pestle and mortar or a hand-operated stone grinder.

Assuming two cooker operations a day, a month's ash will amount to 24 kg which, on blending with 6 kg of freshly slaked lime, would produce a bagful of high-quality cement. This may not seem a large quantity of cement for one household, but the technology demonstrates an idea which can provide the basis for making poor communities self-reliant in cement. For the best results, village co-operatives should be formed to collect the pozzolanic ash in one place and provide cement to each member in turn. Co-operatives would have the added advantage of setting up a quality-control laboratory, and centralized grinding of lime-ash mixture with an edge-runner or other types of equipment which may be less expensive in capital and operating costs than ball mills.

Selection of an Appropriate Technology.

Due to the wide diversity of industrial and social conditions within large rice-growing countries, a single solution to the problem of selecting a technology which is appropriate to the entire country is not feasible. There are certain areas in Brazil, India, Malaysia, and Vietnam where the disposal of rice husk heaps is a major problem, and high-strength acid-resistant cements of the type produced in the USA would be useful for industrial applications. In such cases, proper utilization of the raw material potential, and fulfilment of local needs will be optimized by selecting the air-suspension type of furnace. On the other hand, there are vast areas in many developing countries where, due to decentralized rice-milling, the collection of rice husks for large-scale burning would be expensive. Where rice husks are already in great demand as a fuel for domestic and restaurant

use, and cementitious materials are badly needed for improving the quality of housing for the poor, it will be highly desirable to adopt technologies which permit small-scale manufacture of lime-pozzolan cements from pozzolanic ash.

Thus, at one end of the spectrum is the capital-intensive technology which is quite efficient from the standpoint of utilization of maximum energy and pozzolanic potential of the raw material; at the other end is the inexpensive technology of a domestic rice-husk cooker which is not as efficient as the air-suspension furnace. In between, there are limitless possibilities. How about a scaled-down version of the air-suspension furnace for community kitchens? Or improvements in the design and operation of *tandoor*, *angithi*, and *bhatti* to make them more energy efficient, at the same time producing ash with good pozzolanicity?

This is because the success of lime-RHA cements depends on the recognition that the lime-pozzolan reaction is very slow and therefore, even for ordinary construction work, good pozzolanicity in the ash is needed to achieve adequate strength in a reasonable time. In short, the technology can be modified or developed to suit the social and economic objectives of a society, but the underlying scientific principles have to be understood and respected.

Conclusion.

While the American technology for recovering energy and making high-strength cements from rice husks may not be suitable for large-scale applications in developing countries, the alternative technologies being developed in the rice-growing countries of Asia are neither aimed at utilization of the full potential of the raw material, nor take into account the needs of the poor for a readily available cooking fuel and a masonry cement of reliable quality. Although these alternative technologies are less expensive than the US technology, they are still beyond

the reach of the poor; also, the quality of cement has been neither adequate nor consistent.

Only a technology based on sound scientific principles can be quality-effective; only one which is owned and controlled directly by the people at the lowest strata of society can be relied upon to serve their needs. Rice husks and

other crop residues, which yield large quantities of high-silica ash on combustion have the potential of making a significant contribution to meeting the needs of the poor in developing countries for domestic fuel and low-cost cement provided the scientific and socio-economic aspects of the technology alternatives are kept in proper perspective.

Miss Noble Into Sister Nivedita (Contd. From Page 134)

years later to a friend : "...suppose Swami had not come to London that time! Life would have been like a headless torso!"³¹ In the interest of fairness to history, it must be added however that the Master needed the Disciple as much as the Disciple needed the Master. The disciple needed the master to harmonize all her possibilities while the Master needed the disciple to have someone (to quote Nivedita's own words), "...to pour his own mind and thought into"³² ... to have above all, "a woman radiating with infinite freedom, who had developed her talents to the limit of their capacity, who had amassed gifts which could be used later like helpful

tools."³³ Therefore, one evening in November 1896, when in a gathering at the house of Henrietta Muller in which both the Master and the disciple were guests, Margaret announced through Miss Muller that she intended to realize herself by working for the Master in India, Swami Vivekananda gently responded by saying: "Yes in India...that is where you belong."³⁴

That moment marked an epoch—the beginning of an era of transformation in the life and career of the disciple that was to become Sister Nivedita.

31. Letter to Miss Josephine MacLeod, dated July 26, 1904. See *Letters of Sister Nivedita*, Editor, Sankari Prasad Basu (Calcutta : Nababharat Publishers, 1982) Vol II, P. 661

32. *Ibid.*

33. Reymond, p. 52.

34. *Ibid.*, p. 53

Sri Ramkrishna's Relevance for an Emerging World View

S. SRINIVASACHAR

(Continued from the previous issue)

This is part three of the author, Sri S. Srinivasachar's article on how men may develop a new way of looking at themselves and the world. The learned author discusses the mystics' intuitive perceptions of spiritual truths, and revolutionary changes brought about the science against the background of man's ever-present problem of living at peace in society, in mixed cultures and strained environment. The author is on the teaching faculty of the Ramakrishna Institute of Moral and Spiritual Education, Mysore.

Arthur Koestler wrote that in one of his early experiences as a communist he found himself involuntarily in a mystic state while he was in General Franco's prison cell awaiting execution along with many others. "... that I had ceased to exist.. [because it (the 'I') had been] ... dissolved in the Universal Pool, [bringing about] "peace that passeth all understanding." ¹ This state which was apparently not motivated by any religious meditation, came to him spontaneously. It completely altered the author's perceptions on life and he later abandoned communism: " I went to communism (in 1931) as one goes to a fresh spring of water, and I left communism (in 1938) as one climbs out of a poisoned river strewn with the wreckage of flooded cities and the corpses of the drowned. The reeds to which I clung and which saved me from being swallowed up were the outgrowth of a new faith." ²

Sri Ramakrishna's personal experiences of ecstasy in a state of undifferentiated unity is perhaps in a similar class with these, proving the theses that : 1) Mystic experience knows no barriers of culture or religion or theology, 2) that it is an experience of undifferentiated unity, 3) that it is not capable of being fully communicated to others due to the limitations of lan-

guage, 4) that it is an experience of ineffable joy, and 5) it is paradoxical, transcending logic, space and time. To this must be added the mystics' unanimous view that it is from the highest spiritual experience that all the fundamental ethical values sprout. In an interesting observation that Koestler makes on the basis of his mystic consciousness— " It struck me as self-evident that ... we were all responsible for each other— not only in the superficial sense of social responsibility, but because, in some inexplicable manner, we partook of the same substance of identity, like Siamese twins or communicating vessels.... If everybody were an island, how could the world be a concern of his ?" ³ The mystics hold, without exception, that in a state in which all distinctions are lost, how could there be any distinction between 'I', 'you' and 'they' ? All ideas of injustice, cruelty, hatred, jealousy, selfishness and the like spring only from a sense of separate individuality which is wiped out in spiritual experience. Even the prospect of death loses all meaning, because the fear of death arises only due to our attachment to an insignificantly small world of relations of which we are physically a part. When the 'I' gets dissolved in an ocean of bliss, there is no room for tensions of any kind.

1. Walter T. Stace, *The Teachings of the Mystics*, p. 230

2. Arthur Koestler, *The Invisible Writing* (New York : Macmillan, 1954) p. 15.

Elaborating on the relative ethical implications of an Impersonal God and pantheistic faith

3. *Ibid.*, pp. 355-56

and faith in a personal God, Swami Vivekananda observes : "How can you expect morality to be developed through fear ... [of God] ? It can never be. ... Love cannot come through fear ... [of a personal God] ; its basis is freedom. When we really begin to love the world, then we understand what is meant by brotherhood of mankind, and not before." ⁴

In an address which he delivered in 1941 at a symposium on Science, Philosophy and Religion in New York, Albert Einstein almost echoed the same idea when he said :

In this struggle for the ethical good, teachers of religion must have the stature to give up the doctrine of a Personal God, that is, give up the source of fear and hope which in the past placed such vast power in the hands of priests.

Upholding the Vedantic concept of unity as a basis for ethics, Swami Vivekananda says :

The motive power of the whole universe, in whatever way it manifests itself, is that one wonderful thing, unselfishness, renunciation, love, the real, the only living force in existence. Therefore the Vedantist insists upon that oneness. We insist upon this explanation because we cannot admit two causes of the universe ... one good and the other evil, one love and the other hatred. Which is more logical ? Certainly the one-force theory. ⁵

Vivekananda always held that man is essentially good and his deepest inclination is to do good; if he behaves contrary to this nature it is because of ' the limitation of the unlimited ' by which he means that immoral action comes only when an individual, veiled by ignorance, directs his love through very narrow channels. To Sri Ramakrishna, spiritual life was the ideal, the terminal point of devotion. But what prepared him for it was the purity and inner strength that flowed from love, compassion, service and humility. Whenever he spoke about learned men like Vidyasagar or Keshab Chandra Sen, he was very particular to know whether their learning was accompanied by humility. He attached very high value to this quality because it promoted the qualities of love, compassion, service and a

yearning for God. It was unthinkable that one who yielded to temptations of lust and greed could ever qualify for the spiritual quest: " Why should one talk only about sin and hell, and such things ? Say but once, ' O Lord, I have undoubtedly done wicked things, but I won't repeat them'. And have faith in His name." ⁶ Sri Ramakrishna considered attachment to truth as the greatest of virtues. "If a man clings tenaciously to truth he ultimately realizes God. Without this regard for truth, one gradually loses everything." ⁷

Not a Life-negating Mystic

It would be an error to characterize Hindu mysticism as invariably non-dualistic and a negation of life's realities and moral virtues. For a Vedantin, burning love of God should overflow into visible channels of love for the suffering (*Bhūta-dayā*). This love, by its very nature will be universal and not confined to mankind alone. It is never conceded that the spiritual quest should be permitted to deflect a man from his path of duty or self-effort. Dependence on God's mercy can never be a substitute for human effort even as learning and logic cannot be a substitute for the knowledge of God. Sri Ramakrishna asks : " Why should we trouble the Lord for what can be accomplished by our own exertions ? " Referring to householders, he says that they should diligently perform their duties. He does not advise sannyasa for one who has not fulfilled his duties in the world. In another context, while discoursing with a sub-judge he said : " Why should you give up the world ? Since you must fight, it is wise for you to fight from a fort. You must fight against your sense-organs, against your hunger and thirst. Therefore you will be wise to face the battle from the world." ⁸ Sri Ramakrishna's idea of renunciation was not based on a philosophy of

4. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta : Advaita Ashrama, 1989) Vol. II, p. 322

5. *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 355

6. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Madras : Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, 1985) p. 138

7. *Ibid.*, p. 312

8. *Ibid.*, p. 627

life-negation. His admonition was that so long as one was engaged in worldly activities, he should be guided by a genuine spirit of service. Everyone should be guided by a genuine spirit of service. Everyone should do sincerely what is enjoined on him by the station he has chosen in life. He is free to enjoy the fruits thereof so long as he does not become covetous. While acts of charity and compassion are necessary, they should become part of his spiritual endeavour and not be motivated by desire for profit or fame. This is real morality. "Those who build hospitals and dispensaries and get pleasure from that, are no doubt good people, but they are of a different type. ... You may think you have no motive behind your work, but perhaps there has already grown (in you) a desire for fame."⁹

Sri Ramakrishna's concept of morality was an integral part of the spiritual quest. Religious intolerance or hatred was, to him, a denial of both the moral and spiritual imperatives. He never failed to emphasize that all the religions of the world contain the same truth, however much they may differ in their theology or externals. To him mere tolerance, however, had a deeper connotation. Tolerance implies a certain amount of condescension towards the other, a facet of the ego which is not fully enlightened. To Sri Ramakrishna, though, it entailed a certain effort to identify with the other point of view to discover its positive side. It was in this spirit that he voluntarily underwent other disciplines — those prescribed by Christianity and Islam, and experienced a vision of the Madonna with Jesus in her arms, or Christ as an embodiment of light and Love, and of Mohammed, the Prophet of God.

New Scientific Thinking And Sri Ramakrishna

" It is the aim of science to establish general rules which determine the reciprocal connection of objects and events in time and space. ... The

fact that on the basis of such laws we are able to predict the temporal behaviour of phenomena in certain domains with great precision and certainty is deeply embedded in the consciousness of the modern man, even though he may have grasped very little of the contents of those laws. ... To be sure, when the number of factors coming into play in phenomenological complex is too large, scientific method in most cases fails us ... " said Albert Einstein.¹⁰

It is no more a point for argument that life is a mystery. An even greater mystery is the world of Superconsciousness. Physicists do not expect, and should not be expected, to give up their mechanistic view because the organic world view cannot help the scientist to solve his technical problems or build machines. The difference between the scientist whose methods are experimental and results quantifiable, and the mystic whose method is meditative, intuitive, and non-quantifiable, is real. But this is no reason to deny the validity of both the levels of Knowledge — one sensory, and the other of the Super-sensory; the one that belongs to relations and the other where relations do not exist. Our storehouse of knowledge has grown both from the rational and from the intuitive faculties. The two are not antagonistic; they are complementary. Where the one stops and cannot proceed on its own momentum, the other takes over, but on an entirely different plane. If Sri Ramakrishna's spiritual endeavours have any meaning at all, it is to demonstrate this complementarity. As we discussed earlier, he did not retire like a hermit to a forest in pursuit of *Nirvāna*. He recognized the value of learning and scholarship, but he proved that one's spiritual experience can be unrelated to such an acquisition. The old dichotomy between science and religion is gradually yielding place to new perceptions in which Capra's 'organic world-view' is, in his words, "... although of little value for science

9. *Ibid.*, p. 671

10. Albert Einstein, *Ideas and Opinions* (Calcutta : Rupa & Co., 1984) p. 38.

and technology on the human scale, becomes extremely useful at the atomic and sub-atomic level."¹¹

The new scientific hypothesis (called the 'bootstrap philosophy' of modern physics)* shares the world-view with Buddhist and Taoist mystics "... that there is mutual interrelation and self-sufficiency" in all phenomena, that there are no fundamental constituents of matter, and "that the universe is an inseparable whole where all forms are fluid and ever-changing and there is no room for any fixed fundamental unity". Indian mystics, Buddhist or Hindu, do not mince words when they speak of the illusory nature of our sensory knowledge, in which pluralities and relations exist in a state of continuous flux.

The human mind works at the empirical level and all our perceptions are conditioned by our sense of space and time which provide the frame for the events of which we ourselves are a part. This has so far determined our World-View. It is exactly this World-view that has bred and nourished the egocentric attitudes in men, involving them not only in mutual conflicts, but pitting them against Nature itself. If Sri Ramakrishna's spiritual exertions are evaluated in the light of new-thinking in sub-atomic physics, microbiology — not to speak of the

alarming ecological crisis, we shall be left with no option but to ponder on the wisdom of Seers who comprehended the organic unity in all the diversity that we see.

The Residual Problem And Sri Ramakrishna's Answer

We are thus left with a residual problem — a problem of vital importance to science as well as to religion — whether the world of flux in which we live, think and operate, is only our mental construct, or *maya*. Also, if according to the mystic view, Superconsciousness alone is the primary reality and the ground of all Knowledge — "material, formless and void of all content", in what way can we comprehend this Consciousness ? Is it possible to derive from such relative knowledge a definable goal in terms of values which should regulate our moral and spiritual life ? In the state of undifferentiated unity there is extinction of all dualities when the individual soul loses its identity in the Absolute. This extinction of duality should amount to physical annihilation also, since space and time within whose framework the ego functioned are also annihilated.

As a corollary, one would naturally be inclined to enquire whether Sri Ramakrishna faced this problem as a mystic, and if he did, how ? This would be of interest to everyone who values religion as a primary force in the evolution of man as a moral and spiritual being. As a *sādhaka* or 'achiever', he experienced various levels of *Samādhi* of which the ultimate state is one of identity with Brahman.

If undifferentiated unity is synonymous with physical annihilation, how can one 'experience' ecstasy in such a state ? We see from the records that the mystic returns to his natural state to tell the story, or, is unable to do so because the experience itself was ineffable. Sri Ramakrishna answers this problem in an ingenious way. According to him, what actually happens in this state of identity is that what is annihilated is the grossness of the ego — "the ego of ignorance",

11. Fritjof Capra, *The Tao of Physics* (London : Fontana-Collins, 1975) p. 321.

* "Quantum theory has shown that sub-atomic particles are not isolated grains of matter but are probability patterns, interconnections in an inseparable cosmic web that includes the human observer and her/his consciousness. Relativity theory has made the cosmic web come alive, so to speak, by revealing its intrinsically dynamic character; by showing that its activity is the very essence of its being. In modern physics, the image of the universe as a machine has been transcended by a view of it as one indivisible dynamic whole whose parts are essentially interrelated and can be understood only as patterns of a cosmic process. At the sub-atomic level the interrelations and interactions between the parts of the whole are more fundamental than the parts themselves. There is motion but there are, ultimately, no moving objects; there is activity but there are no actors; there are no dancers, there is only the dance." Fritjof Capra, *The Turning Point* (London: Fontana-Collins, 1982) p.6.

and what survives is the "ego of knowledge" or "the ego of love" or "the servant ego". If we should risk a simile, the ego loses its impurity in the state of non-dualism as gold loses its blemishes in fire. The following dialogue between Sri Ramakrishna and Mahimacharan is significant :

MAHIMA (*to the Master*) : "Sir, can a man return from the plane of samadhi to the plane of the ordinary world?"

SRI RAMAKRISHNA (*in a low voice, to Mahima*) : "I shall tell you privately. You are the only one fit to hear it.

"Koar Singh also asked me that question. You see, there is a vast difference between the jiva and Iswara. Through worship and austerity, a jiva can at the utmost attain samadhi, but he cannot come down from that state. On the other hand, an Incarnation of God can come down from samadhi. A jiva is like an officer of the king; he can go as far as the outer court of the seven-storey palace. But the king's son has access to all the seven floors; he can also go outside. ... How [then] do you account for sages like Sankara and Ramanuja ? They retained the 'ego of Knowledge'. ... If you see in anyone a trace of 'I-consciousness' after the attainment of true Knowledge, then know that it is either the 'ego of Knowledge' or the 'ego of Devotion' or the 'servant ego'. It is not the 'ego of ignorance'. ... The God of the jnani is full of brilliance, and the God of the bhakta full of sweetness."¹²

In other words, this survival of ego in its purer form is a gift of God's mercy that comes to the *Iswarakotis*, freed souls, who, "on returning to the plane of relative consciousness after attaining samadhi" can work for the welfare of humanity. Speaking to Narendra (Vivekananda) on the subject, Sri Ramakrishna said : "I have seen that He and the One who dwells in my heart are one and the same person."

In another interesting conversation between Sri Ramakrishna and a devotee, the devotee asks :

— "Then why should one call the world *maya* ?" And Sri Ramakrishna replies : "He who has attained God knows that it is God who has become all this. Then he sees the God, *maya*, living beings, and the universe form one whole. God includes the universe and the living

beings."¹³ Attainment of God, according to Sri Ramakrishna, leads one to the Knowledge that comes from discrimination, that is, that God alone is eternal and that all else is impermanent. So true religious experience results in the awakening of the spirit of discrimination and not a spirit of disdain for things that belong to this world. Even the world of flux is a part of God and to that extent we shall have to take note of everything that belongs to it. To another searching question from the devotee : "Is there no virtue and no sin?" Sri Ramakrishna replied: "They both exist and do not exist. If God keeps the ego in man, then he keeps in him the sense of differentiation and also the sense of virtue and sin. But in a rare few He completely effaces the ego and these go beyond virtue and sin, good and bad."¹⁴

He says very clearly that it is anti-God to commit sin. ... "It is God alone who does everything. You may say that in that case man may commit sin. But that is not true. If a man is firmly convinced that God alone is the Doer and that he himself is nothing, then he will never take a false step."¹⁵

This brought the sage directly to the concept of 'free will'. He elaborated on the idea in the following words to the disciple :

It is God alone who had planted in man's mind what the Westerners call free will. People who have not realized God would become engaged in more and more sinful actions if God had not planted in them the notion of free will. Sin would have increased if God had not made the sinner feel that he alone was responsible for his sin.

Those who have realized God are aware that free will is a mere appearance. In reality man is the machine and God its Operator, man is the carriage and God its Driver.¹⁶

The classical scientific notion that an individual is an isolated self, autonomous and free-willed, is gradually being undermined by the New Physics which postulates inherent har-

12. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, pp. 767-68.

13. *Ibid.*, pp. 327-28.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 328

15. *Ibid.*, p. 379

16. *Ibid.*, pp. 379-80

mony in nature as a result of "new explorations in the atomic and sub-atomic world". To the mystic, the notion of free will is relative, limited and, as they would say, illusory, like all other concepts we use in our rational descriptions of reality.

The mystic concept of God being the indwelling Principle in the universe is likely to give rise to doctrinal disputations, because if God is in everything, and everything is suffused with divinity, evil also becomes a part of God. Sri Ramakrishna's answer to this seems to agree with what the scientists say, though their presentations may be different. The autonomy or free will exercised by organisms, according to the systems-point-of-view, increases in proportion to the complexity of the organism, and man is the most complex of the organisms. He therefore enjoys a greater degree of autonomy than any other living creature to function in an environment which is perennially in flux. If it is the goal of man to transcend the world of appearances, to enjoy the presence of Reality, he has to rid himself of all his limitations. This is the moral imperative that has to precede his spiritual endeavour. So, the question of equating evil with good, or denying the reality of both as a mere appearance, does not arise at all. A man of God *can never* think of evil. It is also worthy to note that mystic experience can come to a man in any walk of life.

That a new World-View is emerging is a fact. It is a fact because the mystics' view of cosmic unity and the unsubstantial relativity of time, space and natural laws is finding an echo, however feeble yet, from the scientists. The concept of an organic universe in which events do not occur as unrelated phenomena, or where objects do not function as independent units, is taking root as a follow-up of the Quantum Theory. The thinking of men is changing. The emerging World-View cannot and will not become a creed, but it will be a new and more

brilliant perception of man of himself in relation to the cosmos. In this perception, which came to Sri Ramakrishna as a product of his Superconsciousness, as indeed it came to many others before him, we see the prospect of a new sense of destiny where faith and reason are not locked in fight but orchestrate in harmony; where religion frees itself from the irrelevance of externals; where the pursuit of scientific knowledge is in happy alliance with the pursuit of values. Sri Ramakrishna's mysticism is suggestive of a World-View in which all relations are governed by love and understanding. In itself, this may not make a new religion, nor will it negate the great religions which, in their essence, he found to be equally true. The new trends in scientific thinking which we have briefly noticed give us some hope that the credit of discovering a UNIVERSAL SELF which has so far been claimed for religion will be soon shared also by the New Science. From this new-found alliance a Universal Religion may emerge to shape the Universal Man. The spirit of such a universal religion will only be a full-throated echo of what other prophets said before their words came to be corrupted by the deeds of their followers.

*There are as many ways to God as there
are souls, as many as breaths of Adam's sons.*

Prophet Mohammad in Hadis

*Those who worship other Gods with faith,
they too adore me. Behind these forms,
unknowing yet, of the one direct way—*

Bhagavad Gita

Vivekananda Among The Saints

DOROTHY MADISON

(continued from the previous issue)

This is the concluding part of Ms. Dorothy Madison's brilliant portrayal of Swami Vivekananda. His many-sided personality and extraordinary mind and character continue to reveal the unfathomability of this saint-extraordinaire. The author is an active worker spreading the ideas of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda in the U.S. She lives in Alameda, California.

Although Swamiji's opinion of miracle-working was altogether bad—no amount of fiddling can ever change that—he himself was often the focal point of extraordinary miracles witnessed by others, although not by himself. One such miracle was related by his fellow-disciple, Swami Shivananda:

One night I had fallen asleep beside Swamiji. There were also Swami Ramakrishnananda and others sleeping nearby. In the dead of the night I suddenly awoke and found the whole inside of the mosquito net flooded with light. Looking beside me for Swamiji, I could not find him, but in his place were a number of little Shivas lying asleep, all of them seven or eight year old boys, beautiful, of white complexion and with matted locks on their heads. It was the light of their bodies that illumined the room. This sight amazed me profoundly. At first I could not understand it at all; I thought it was an hallucination. Rubbing my eyes well, I looked again and saw the same little sleeping Shivas. I just sat there, not knowing what to do. Aside from not wishing to lie down, I was afraid that if I fell asleep my feet might touch the Shivas. The whole night I spent more or less in meditation. When morning came I found Swamiji sleeping there as in the beginning of the night. Later in the morning, when I had told him everything, he laughed a great deal. Long after, I unexpectedly came across the Sanskrit hymn addressed to Shiva Vireswara, and in it I found Shiva described exactly as I had seen him that night. Then I knew that I had had a true vision; it had revealed the true nature of Swamiji. He was born of the being of Shiva—that is what I saw in this vision.

For the present discussion the point about Swami Shivananda's vision of Swamiji is not the little sleeping Shivas—as mind-boggling as that is—but the great light which he perceived around them. This light is a phenomenon shared

by many saints. The great Hasidic master, the Baal Shem Tov, for example, while praying, took on the shape of a mountain on fire. His son who witnessed this miracle asked him why he appeared to him in this form. His father replied, "In this form I serve the Lord."²

Again, another luminous saint, the Sufi-Islamic mystic, Rabi'ya, who in her girlhood was spied upon one night by her master, won her freedom through a miracle of light. It seems that as she was praying, her master saw a lamp, minus a chain, hanging above her head, flooding the entire house with its brilliance. Next morning, terrified, he set Rabi'ya free.³

Similar tales about luminosity abound among Christian saints. For example, the light which habitually surrounded St. Ludwina of Schiedam is described in a biography written by her contemporary, Thomas a Kempis:

She [St. Ludwina] was discovered by her companions to be surrounded by so great a divine brightness that, seeing the splendour and struck with exceeding fear, they dared not approach nigh to her.⁴

Not unlike St. Ludwina's light was the light which some of Swamiji's brother disciples occasionally saw radiating from his body. Swami Turiyananda once entered Swamiji's "room

2. Harry M. Rabinowicz, *Hasidism, The Movement and its Masters* (Northvale, New Jersey: Jason Aronson, 1988), 35.

3. Margaret Smith, *Rabi'ya, The Mystic*, (San Francisco: The Rainbow Bridge, 1977), 7.

4. Herbert Thurston, S.J., *The Physical Phenomena of Mysticism* (London: Burns Oates, 1952), 167.

1. Swami Apurvananda, "Conversations with Swami Shivananda," *The Voice of India*, (May 1946), 299.

while the Swami was lying on his bed, and beheld, in place of Vivekananda's physical body, a mass of radiance."⁵ Again, Swami Vijnanananda related some of his more unusual encounters with Swamiji at Belur Math. He said :

Swamiji is still in that room of his. That is why, when passing by that room, I do so with great care, so that I do not cause any great disturbance to his meditation. When he was living in his body, I had once seen him meditating in that room. At that time I was wonderstruck to find the whole room lighted with the radiance emanating from his body. Was he an ordinary man?⁶

Asked whether he still saw Swamiji, Swami Vijnanananda said, "Of course I do, I see him sometimes pacing this verandah or on the terrace and sometimes singing in his room, and in many other ways."⁷

Another fellow disciple, Swami Akhandananda, had a truly extraordinary meeting with Swamiji after Swamiji's death. In reply to a question, he said :

Yes, I have seen Swamiji after his passing away, as clearly as I see you now; otherwise I would not have lived. Separation from him was so painful that I was going to commit suicide, but I was prevented by Swamiji. He caught my hand as I was about to jump under a running train.⁸

To this day people still manage to catch sight of Swamiji now and then. But of far more consequence than these random sightings, is the fact that Swamiji actually makes himself a mighty fortress for souls who have thrown themselves into the battle for Self-knowledge or selfless service or abandonment to God, or other campaigns of pure religion. Most especially does he become the stay and guardian of men and women who enter into his own campaign of "man-making," the religion so near his heart.

5. Nikhilananda, *Vivekananda*, 85.

6. Swami Jnanatmananda, *Invitation to Holy Company* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1980), 90.

7. Swami Apurvananda, *Swami Vijnanananda*, (Muthiganj, Allahabad: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1984), 152.

8. Swami Niramayananda, *The Call of the Spirit, Conversations with Swami Akhandananda* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1984) 61.

It goes without saying that in this particular function of sainthood—the saint's sacred and eternal trust to strengthen and transform human hearts and minds—Swamiji is revealed as a saint to his very marrow. Indeed, he said more than once that he would continue to work after death :

It may be that I shall find it good to get outside my body—to cast it off like a worn-out garment. But I shall not cease to work ! I shall inspire men everywhere until the world shall know that it is one with God!⁹

This declaration of Swamiji's may sound Promethean in its utterance, but Swamiji meant business. Signs of his after-death activities keep surfacing in all kinds of ways, some of them a bit exotic-seeming to lifelong students of Vivekananda. In New York, for example, there is a Vivekananda adherent who has no formal Vedanta-Society connection with Swamiji, but a direct one through spirit. This dedicated teacher is preparing bright, young, selfless men^{*} and women to serve, lead, and instruct the survivors of cataclysmic disasters slated to occur near the end of the century. He knows for certain that it is Swami Vivekananda who is guiding him in what he is doing, and he makes Swamiji's works and Sri Ramakrishna's teachings required reading for his students and followers. Not only does he find Swamiji's teachings to be nonsectarian, universal, and as unconfined as primordial space, but he says that Swamiji himself is still teaching people here on earth as well as on other, invisible levels.¹⁰

But long before the advent of the current "New Age," with its prognostications of global wreckage, Swamiji was carrying out his promise to work after^{*}death. No less a sage than Sri Aurobindo attested that in 1908 in the Alipore jail he received inspiration from Swamiji :

It is a fact, that I was hearing constantly the voice of Vivekananda speaking to me for a fortnight in the jail in my

9. *Life*, 2: 661.

10. Ruth Montgomery, *Aliens Among Us* (New York: Fawcett Crest Book, Ballantine Books, 1985), 155-88.

solitary meditation and felt his presence. The voice spoke on a very important field of spiritual experience.¹¹

Years later Sri Aurobindo enlarged upon this episode :

It was the spirit of Vivekananda who first gave me a clue in the direction of the Supermind. This clue let me to see how the Truth-consciousness works in every thing... He did not say 'Supermind.' 'Supermind' is my own word. He just said to me, 'This is this, this is that' and so on. That was how he proceeded—by pointing and indicating. He visited me for fifteen days in Alipore jail, and, until I could grasp the whole thing, he went on teaching me and impressed upon my mind the working of the higher Consciousness—the Truth-consciousness in general—which leads towards the Supermind. He would not leave until he had put it all into my head...I had never expected him and yet he came to teach me and he was exact and precise even in the minutest details.¹²

Not many years after Sri Aurobindo's visitations from Swamiji, a young student named Jogesh Chandra Datta, of Sylhet in East Bengal (present Bangladesh), was taken in hand by Swamiji, and given both spiritual initiation and spiritual power. In recounting the opening episode of his lifelong discipleship to Swami Vivekananda he said :

During the afternoon I was meditating on the Divine Mother, Kali, as was my custom, when suddenly I felt that the presence of the Mother was replaced by the vivid presence of Swamiji. The change was quite sudden and very distinct, and immediately I began to feel that Swamiji was pouring his power and spirit into me. It was a definite and unmistakable experience. Just as you would put the mouth of a full jar against the mouth of an empty one, one above the other, and just as the contents of the first would pour into the second without reservation or obstruction, so his power poured into me. As I was about to lose consciousness, I pulled myself from that state. But the thing had been accomplished fully.¹³

Rational by nature, young Jogesh Chandra could not explain his bone-rattling experience by any appeal to reason, and so asked one after another, over a period of years, Swami

11. Swami Jyotirmayananda, ed., *Vivekananda, His Gospel of Man-making* (Madras: Swami Jyotirmayananda, 'Shakti', 1986) 239.

12. *Ibid.*

13. Swami Ashokananda, *Memories of Swami Shivananda* (San Francisco: Vedanta Society of Northern California, 1969), 4.

Premananda, Swami Turiyananda, Swami Brahmananda, and Swami Shivananda—all direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna—whether or not his experience had made him a true and actual disciple of Swamiji. Although they all said that it had indeed made him Swamiji's disciple, only Swami Shivananda was able to dispel his lingering uncertainty. In due course, Jogesh Chandra became a monk of the Ramakrishna Order, living and dying in a foreign land where he spread, preached, taught, and applied his great teacher's Religion of Man-making.

Now, at this juncture, with Swamiji's saintly attributes duly noted—any more visions, miracles, graces, or mercies would be overkill—the quiddity, essence, crux, or "whatness" of his and of all saints' sainthood begins to grow clear. First, it is self-evident that the aspect of the human personality which is peculiarly the saint's own, and the one in which the saint is perfected, is neither the luminous intellect nor the hurricane will, but the labyrinths of feeling and emotion. The saint is, after all, primarily the genius of love, and is also, therefore, master, arbiter, and example of love's various expressions such as sweetness, loving-kindness, affection, tenderness, nobility, beauty, sympathy, compassion, jollity, fellowship, and self-sacrifice. But second, because love, as one emotion among many, is also blood-brother of other, not so silken states of mind beginning with pride, hatred, anger, desire, avarice, envy, sloth, and jealousy—all of them endemic in the human personality—the saint must perforce be a lion-tamer. That is to say, he must have the hardihood to face these irrational beasts, his negative emotions, in very close quarters and teach them not to chew or maul him, but to jump through burning hoops, if he so insists, or play dead or even allow him to place his head in their mouths.

Third, although the metaphorical lion-tamer may become undoubted master of his peaceful beasts, he usually has to keep an eye out lest there be trouble. Some saints, for example, upon

reaching a stage in which they discover human or other beings to be divinely attractive, allow themselves to grow careless in their practice of detachment and, falling into states of infatuation, fall also, alas, out of God's grace. Others, like Lord's own Lucifer, allow pride to insinuate its way into their hearts, and like that rebel-angel are hurled into the pit. But there are still others such as Swamiji and his great fellow disciples, and even more dramatically, Sri Ramakrishna himself, who exercise such perfect mastery over their feelings and emotions that they do not have to pay attention to them anymore, let alone guard against them.

Fourth and finally, the difference between the saint whose lions need no watching and the saint whose lions do, is actually the degree of self-love, in the heart of the lion-tamer. The greater the self-love, the more fractious the lions; the less the self-love, the more docile the lions. Indeed, just as animals and birds quieted down in the presence of St. Francis, just as the Himalayan tiger padded away from Swamiji, and the charging bull halted in front of him, (while the Englishman ran for his life), just, indeed, as no beast, however ferocious, harms a man or a woman perfect in the practice of non-violence (*ahimsā*), so no ruinous feelings or emotions ever beset the man or woman in whom self-abnegation has become absolute. Crudely stated, there is simply no self-love left in the selfless saint which can either attract or be attracted to anything that does not smell of the Infinite. Constantly inundated, diluted, and dissolved in the bliss of the Infinite, the saint's emotions have, in every respect, become god-like, and his once-injurious, negative emotions turned into harmless cuttlebone on the sandy floor of the sea.

In the end what the quiddity of the saints comes down to is the pure and shining love which remains after every last bit of I, Me, and Mine has been filtered out of it. Love as immaculate as this differs in no respect from God's own love in His aspect of bliss. Further,

as this love floods back and forth in all its power, beauty, and brilliance between God and saint, it transforms the lover of God into a figure of extraordinary attraction and authority.

In the case of Swami Vivekananda, the saint's powers of attraction and authority served as a counter-balance to other, even more potent forces at work in him. Specifically, they allayed, tempered, and sweetened the severity and harshness of that inestimably profounder authority which he wielded as Prophet, Founder, and Sage. When, for example, he let loose his denunciations of sloth, greed, jealousy, cruelty, or lack of heart, spine, vision, fellow-feeling, and the like, his fellow-disciples, personal disciples, countrymen, the West, and the world—as the case may be—did not collapse in a heap or take mortal offense or run for the hills, but took the full brunt, sensing the absolute love behind his unbearable truths.

Now, simply because Swamiji's saintly powers of attraction and authority have been tagged as counterbalances to other, more intense and portentous powers in his makeup, does not mean that he is *not* a real, honest-to-God quintessential saint, but only a saint incidentally. This makes as little sense as to say that because Janaka was a king and the father of Sita, he was *not* a real knower of the Absolute. Indeed, in the world of spirituality, a goodly number of great saints from many faiths can be classified as quintessential saints, and like Swamiji, although exceedingly gifted, can also be classified as quintessential other things as well. Spiritual geniuses with many arrows in their quiver, to repeat, shatter the saintly hearts-and-flowers stereotype.

At this point it is not out of place to consider the whys and wherefores of the passive saint-figure. To be sure, stereotypes are roughly compounded of one-part information, nine parts ignorance, and a mass of conclusion-jumping. But even so, they often get their start from a perfectly clear and laudable set of circumstan-

ces. Thus the saintly image in question took shape as the result of all kinds of people trying to imitate and live up to the words and examples of such world-teachers as Buddha, Mahavira, Jesus, and Lao-tse. All these god-men embodied and taught non-violent behaviour, passive resistance to evil, or no resistance at all; also, general love and goodwill toward everybody, unconditional kindness, and self-abnegation, to the point of giving one's life for others. In time, the ideals and redemptive power of these mighty teachers conditioned and energized entire cultures and civilizations which in turn, produced the saints so extravagantly admired, imitated, and emulated in days gone by.

Now Swamiji, as a true son of saint-rich India, shared in his nation's heritage of saintly passivity. This trait of his—to lie down now and then in green pastures—did not escape the active eye of Sister Nivedita. In her letters she once referred to it as "his curiously passive attitude to life,"¹⁴ and another time as "that irresponsibility of his," which albeit she called "glorious." By way of explanation she wrote:

Nothing is more enticing than to put oneself into the attitude of generalissimo of the forces—and make splendid plans, "compelling fortune" — but Swami just waits, and drifts in on the wave — and so on. I am just beginning to understand his bigness.¹⁵

As a matter of fact, with the exception of his Master, Swamiji's "bigness" defeated everybody. Because of it the world-at-large still does not know what to make of him, and even the shining world of saints holds its breath. He was, so to speak, a whole new world in himself, with many continents and many seas. Intrinsically, he heralded a new pattern of human universality exemplified by his own personality, wherein the play of the spirit is fully as vital and identifiable as the play of the senses, mind, will and intellect. His own example was, of course,

new, matchless, and altogether daunting, but nonetheless unmistakable and complete.

Like a brilliant bird of passage Swamiji knew his way through humanity's massive ranges of arts, letters, and the sciences; moved like a whirlwind from one labour to another; and vented many non-saintly attitudes and opinions as he endured the shocks and perfidies of fitful fortune and human behaviour. But, as unselective as sunshine, he actively bestowed on innumerable persons, and also on races and nations, the ways, means, and redemptive power to save themselves from spiritual ignorance. However, to his everlasting, purely passive credit, let it be remembered that working against all his selfless, God-driven enterprise, like the ocean against a sea-wall, was his recusant craving for the windless cave and his own dissolution into the unpeopled Absolute. God deemed otherwise, but even so all was not lost.

That is to say, blocked from the Absolute, Swamiji had to perform his labours for the Lord from the tranquil level of the witness-Self. Thus, as the witness-Self he was simultaneously aware of the formless Infinite as well as of the world of name and form. Facing inwards, as the witness-Self, he was formless, timeless, infinite, one with God, and one with everything else on down. Facing outwards, as the Self masquerading as the ego, he was Vivekananda; and he was also the witness-Self, aware of watching himself as Vivekananda. One effect of all this witnessing and watching is that it can easily lead to prolonged stretches of outward idleness, as if an actor suddenly sat down to watch the play instead of performing his role. Now, whenever Sister Nivedita noted Swamiji's "curiously passive attitude towards life," she put her finger on his state of being the witness. Non-stop herself, she did not always find his passive interludes convenient. Thus, when Swamiji had to decide something, but kept putting it off, and thereby missed a passing boat or so, Nivedita had to

14. Nivedita, *Letters*, 1: 308.

15. Nivedita, *CW*, 1: 260.

resort to philosophy. But the real wonder is that Swamiji could manage to comport himself as a rational human being at all—what with his finite human self being held, as it were, in precarious suspension by the intrusive Infinite which was slowly undoing both the boundaries of his ego-sense, as well as its clarity.

If the truth were known, Swamiji is probably the only saint whose largeness of being worked such hardships in him that by age thirty-nine, no longer able to function in and through finite instrumentalities, he abandoned the attempt and “spat out the body.”¹⁶ In this final, hair-raising act there was neither passivity nor lack of planning. He passed out of this world as cleanly, brilliantly, and silently as a shooting star.

However, Swamiji cannot be faulted for deciding to die when he did, by an act of will, inasmuch as the Lord Shiva at Amarnath had vouchsafed to him the power of dying whenever he desired; and Sri Ramakrishna himself had foretold that Swamiji would give up his body when he discovered his true identity. So, although in the manner of his death Swamiji may seem to have passed from the saintly behaviour of the passive witness to the not so saintly behaviour of the active doer, he was clearly behaving according to the will of God. Indeed, as in most other things, but most notably in his death, Swamiji was a sure-enough saint, but he was a saint with a difference.

There are, however, many varieties of saints about whom the same thing can be said—they were saints with a difference. Many of them, like Swamiji himself, never walked but strode. They were the heroic men and women who, as Swamiji's brother-disciple, Swami Ramakrishnananda said, having put “Samadhi and all that on the shelf,” put their hands to the plough and never looked back.¹⁷ Such saints include

16. Nivedita, *CW*, 1: 260.

17. Swami Tapasyananda, *Swami Ramakrishnananda, The Apostle of Sri Ramakrishna to the South* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1972), 247.

many of the world's greatest religious apostles, missionaries, builders, preachers, teachers, founders, and defenders—all of them brave, tough, adventuresome, one-pointed, pioneer types.

Then there are saints—India, in particular, has always been knee-deep in them—who are out-and-out ecstasies, without a thought in their rapt, reckless, wonderful heads for anything except dying of love in God's embrace. Often these ecstasies are without vows of any kind, being the freest of the free. Some are divinely mad, others have eerie powers, and a few have goodly followings.

In addition to these ecstasies, however, another class of bliss-prone saints also pass their lives in samadhi, but out of sight and mind of the populace. Swamiji's great yogi friend, Pavhari Baba, was one of these, and so also the nameless saints and ascetics who continue to inhabit the planet's remote and secret places, upholding the human world with the spiritual power of their unseen presence. Still other ecstasies such as the Hasidic Baal Shem Tov, St. Catherine of Siena, St. Teresa of Avila, and “the great queen Mira Bai, who preached that the Divine Spouse was all,”¹⁸ came out of their seclusion to instruct the world in the love of God.

Then there is the class of saints who begin their search for God by pinning their entire faith on willpower and the ability to build up perfect control and mastery over themselves. These are the mighty ascetics who scare people to death, without meaning to. But despite their steely wills and rugged persons, their hearts are often soft as butter. Filled with loving-kindness, their mere presence calms the fearful, weary, or heartbroken, bringing strength, peace and even joy. St. Anthony and the Desert Fathers were such saints, as were St. Ignatius Loyola, Heinrich Suso, and in recent times, Sri

18. Sister Nivedita, *The Master as I saw Him*, (Calcutta: Udbodhan Office, 1930, Appendix A, to Chapter I), ii.

Ramakrishna's great householder disciple, Sri Nag Mahashaya.

Still another class of saints love books next to God. Glorifying in the endless richness of God as world and idea, they leap like salmon up the fish-ladders and waterfalls of the intellect to the divinity of pure knowledge at its source. Here, the bookish saint exists in bookless bliss, his intellect having proved every bit as effective as the ascetic's will in getting him to God. Saints of this persuasion include Plotinus, Augustine, the Sufi scholar al-Ghazali, the Jewish physician Maimonides, the Dominican monk Thomas Aquinas, Jnanadeva, and the great modern poet-sage of Bengal, Sri Anirvan.

From time to time throughout his life Swamiji had spells of behaving in ways peculiar to one or another of these different saintly categories. One London summer, for example, he described his madcap-ecstatic condition to Mr. Francis Leggett, whom he called "Frankincense":

Some days I get into a sort of ecstasy. I feel that I must bless everyone, everything, love and embrace everything... I am in one of these moods now, dear Francis. ... I bless the day I was born. I have had so much of kindness and love here, and that Love Infinite that brought me into being has guarded every one of my actions, good or bad, (don't be frightened) for what am I, what was I ever, but a tool in His hand?—for whose service I have given up everything, my beloved ones, my joys in life. He is my playful darling, I am His playfellow. There is neither rhyme nor reason in the universe! What reason binds Him? He the playful one is playing these tears and laughs over all parts of the play! Great fun, great fun, as Joe says.

It is a funny world, and the funniest chap you ever saw is He — the Beloved Infinite! Fun, is it not? Brotherhood or playmatehood — a school of romping children let out to play in this playground of the world! Isn't it? Whom to praise, whom to blame, it is all His play. They want explanations, but how can you explain Him? He is brainless, nor has He any reason. He is fooling us with little brains and reason, but this time He won't find me napping.

I have learnt a thing or two. Beyond, beyond reason and learning and talking is the feeling, the "Love", the "Beloved". Ay, Sake, fill up the cup and we will be mad.¹⁹

Just as plainly Swamiji displayed in his behaviour other saintly types, a fact which needs no elaboration. For his own part, Swamiji did not hesitate to call all kinds of people saints. Heading his list were Sri Ramakrishna's monastic disciples, most notably Swami Brahmananda, for whom he had supreme veneration, but whom he nonetheless included when he scolded them for being "all saints for nothing."²⁰ But of all the Master's disciples, the one who never ceased to bring him up short was the great householder, Sri Nag Mahashaya, "One of the greatest of the works of Ramakrishna Paramahansa."²¹

Swamiji also called the Vedic scholar, Max Muller, a saint, and two Americans, Mrs. Ole Bull and Mr. Francis Leggett. It is certainly possible that in some cases the saintliness which Swamiji beheld was actually in his own eye, for his tendency was always to magnify even a shred of virtue into its complete and ideal form. Be that as it may, his spontaneous feeling about the nature of saintliness popped out in one of his spirited talks on the *Gita* in San Francisco:

There is only one sin. That is weakness. When I was a boy I read Milton's *Paradise Lost*. The only good man I had any respect for was Satan. The only saint is that soul that never weakens, faces everything, and determines to die game.²²

On the other hand, Swamiji's own personal saint of saints according to Sister Nivedita, was Shuka Deva, an ancient paramahansa boy, the son of the great sage Vyasa. Why he loved Shuka Deva so much is not hard to deduce from Sister Nivedita's account of one of his talks in Almora:

"He [Shukadeva] is the ideal Paramahansa. To him alone amongst men was it given to drink a handful of the waters of that one undivided Ocean of Sat-Chit-Ananda—existence, knowledge and bliss absolute! Most saints die, having heard only the thunder of its waves upon the shore.

19. CW, 1978, 6: 366-7.

20. CW, 1977, 8: 469.

21. Nivedita, CW, 1: 129.

22. CW, 1986, 1: 479.

A few gain the vision—and still fewer, taste of it. But he drank of the Sea of Bliss!

"Shuka was indeed the Swami's saint. He was the type, to him, of that highest realization to which life and the world are merely play. Long after, we learned how Sri Ramakrishna had spoken of him in his boyhood as "My Shuka." And never can I forget the look, as of one gazing far into the depths of joy, with which he once stood and quoted the words, " 'I know, and Shuka knows, and perhaps Vyasa knows—a little,' says Shiva."²³

What Shiva and Shuka knew, Swamiji told to the world at large. Indeed, if he had his way, he would have tipped the entire human race into Shuka's Ocean and let everybody drown in immortal bliss. As it was, he left way stations here and there, equipped to handle the traffic of truth-seekers making their way along the highways of the universe. Swamiji could do this, because he was an exceedingly mighty saint, and promised that he would be here to help—invisibly of course. How this can be true, and not mere froth, may be gathered from one of his explanations of divine grace:

Grace means this. He who has realized the Atman becomes a storehouse of great power. Making him the centre and with a certain radius, a circle is formed, and whoever comes within the circle becomes animated with the ideas of that saint, i.e., they are overwhelmed by his ideas. Thus without much religious striving, they inherit the results of his wonderful spirituality. If you call this grace, you may do so.²⁴

One of the implications of these words is that whoever avails himself of Swamiji's way stations to God, should be able to reach his des-

tinuation safe and sound, and certainly sooner rather than later.

In no way, however, does Swamiji's view of grace mean that he recommended to God-seekers a slavish adherence to himself or to the personal side of any saint, sage, or prophet under the sun. Swamiji made no bones about such nonsense. He once told his disciples at Thousand Island Park that, "Great saints are the object-lessons of the Principle. But the disciples make the saint the Principle, and then they forget the Principle in the person." (CW 7:21) Since he was, first and last, the new universal man—many-sided with saint writ large—Swamiji could easily identify every kind of mischief which supervenes when people prefer to cleave to the humanity of their prophet rather than to become one with the universe.

Now certainly Swamiji's warnings against the dangers of cultish exclusiveness highlight his own exceedingly free and open religion, but even more they show his sainthood to be rooted in the truth of "the Self that appears as man, the most glorious God that ever was, the only God that ever existed, exists, or ever will exist."²⁵ This Self which appears as man is the supreme vision which he wanted to bring within reach of common humanity, because "then alone a man loves when he finds that the object of his love is not a clod of earth, but it is the veritable God Himself."²⁶

23. Nivedita, CW, 1: 297-8.

24. CW, 1986, 7: 242-3.

25. CW, 1983, 2: 250.

26. *Ibid.*, 286

Reviews & Notices

MAHATMA GANDHI AND ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI by Rev. Anthony Elenjmittam (alias Ishabodhananda), Published By Aquinas Publications, Mt. Mary Road, Bandra, Bombay-400050 : 1985, Pp. 304.

The world has witnessed many saints and saviours from time to time. But there are very few names which could be recorded as universally popular and meaningful for all times to come. Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948) and St. Francis of Assisi (1181-1226) are undoubtedly two names which are of everlasting popularity. They have been meaningful to various generations in the past. But they are more meaningful to human society of the present decade as it experiences emancipation from the threat of nuclear holocaust. Although there is a gap of seven centuries between the Saint and the Mahatma, the lives of both of them emanated rays of Truth and Non-violence which illuminated not only Italy and India but the entire globe. The recent understanding between the two major power-blocs is undoubtedly the result of the message of spirituality of such saints, which was predicted by the noted historian Arnold Toynbee. Mankind has started breathing in a less terrifying atmosphere. The unification of the German state and global togetherness to foil the sack of the small gulf nation of Kuwait show a strong will of mankind today to live up to the ideals of the saint and the Mahatma.

The title under review is authored by Reverend Elenjmittam (b.1915) a man of social concern. He has widely travelled throughout the country and abroad. His contributions to the Welfare Society for Destitute Children are noteworthy. He is the author of several dozen books in English and Italian on themes pertaining to religion and society.

In the present work Reverend Elenjmittam compares the two noble figures of Assisi and Porbandar. He deals at length with the Mahatma, partly because of his native origin, and partly since he himself has been personally in touch with the Faqir of this land. The chronological proximity, of course, further justifies his leaning toward Gandhi. He finds the life of

Gandhi as the standing proof of the great truth that the spirit of war and violence cannot be conquered with more violent war and greater violence. He also finds that the history of Christianity, as distinct from 'churchianity', confirms the truth that violence will never be quenched with violence. Universal benevolence towards all creatures under all circumstances is the only lasting solution. And Saint Francis epitomises the best of Christianity after Jesus, especially of the Catholic tradition. In the anecdote of 'Perfect Joy' the Saint repeatedly asserts that if we could bear the pains and crosses taking them as instruments of the trial of our faith, that is Perfect Joy. The Mahatma also took suffering as the grace of God. The sympathetic understanding of the pains of others qualifies one to be a Vaishnava. The author finds the two personalities as wedded to Lady Poverty. And the wedding is voluntary, not forced, hence no possibility of a divorce. Both of them were humanists as well as naturalists. They preferred the eloquent Voice of Silence that dawns in a heart fully attuned to the lullabies of Nature and Heaven. Through silent example and living out perfect peace under all circumstances the two spiritual giants taught us to locate the divine within us. This would lead to individual well-being and global harmony. This might result in the formation of a successful World-State.

The reading of the book is stimulating. The work is worth procuring.

Sri S.P. Dubey
Durgavati University
Jabalpur

SADGURU SHRI LALITA MAULI by Vinay Kumar. Printed And Published By Sri Gurudas V. Masurkar, B/31 Gajanan Society, Ltd., Dilip Gupte Road, Mahim, Bombay 400-016, 1990. Pp. 6 + 43; Rs.7/-

This is a short biography of a woman saint—now an octogenarian who cherished a strong love of God from her childhood. The author has narrated her life story with much devotion and also rendered some of

her devotional songs and poems. They are full of divine wisdom. Maauli's life will certainly inspire the aspirant to march forward towards the Goal Supreme in all the circumstances of life.

Swami Brahmasthananda
R.K.Math, Hyderabad

SELF AND NON-SELF : The Drig-Drīśya-Viveka, attributed to Sankara Translated from the Sanskrit with a commentary by Raphael; Published by Kegan Paul International Limited, P.O. Box 256, London WC1B 3SW, England; 1990, Pp. 3 + 197; £. 15/-.

The book under review is an English translation of the Italian version of *Drig-Drīśya-Viveka*, attributed to Sri Sankaracharya. It was published in Italian by Asram Vidya in 1977 with a translation and commentary by Raphael, the founder of the Asram Vidya Order. The present book has been translated into English by Kay McCarthy and has a foreword by A.J.Alston.

An enquiry of the Self, transcending the barriers of non-self by discrimination, and realizing the non-dual Consciousness within and without is the central theme of Advaita Vedanta. The *Drig- Drīśya-Viveka* is a short treatise of forty-six Sanskrit verses which analyses the illusory perceptions of names and forms in the states of dreams and waking as well. In effect, it reveals the real nature of the perceiver as infinite consciousness—Existence-knowledge-Blis Absolute. The commentator has given the scientific explanation of the meaning which helps the reader to discriminate and separate the observer (*drk*) from the observed objects (*drīśya*).

The self—the Atman is by its own nature pure and perfect, but on account of intrinsic power of *Maya*, the self is deluded and is identified with the world of names and forms which are themselves illusory. The commentator explains the nature of *Jīva* in terms of scientific concepts such as 'electronic particle' and 'atomic nucleus', and proceeds further with the text, how *Jīva* attains the higher states of *samadhi* and knows its real nature in the highest realization, viz. *Nirvikalpa Samadhi*, transcending the realm of mind and intellect. The true *Jīva (Atman)*, an observer (*drk*), recognizes its identity with *Brahman*, and is real as the witness without being identified

with the world of phenomena, whether objective or subjective. (p.61)

The scholarly commentary, ranging in its reference from Western savants such as Plotinus, St. Augustine, Pascal and Sir James Jeans, to Indian scholars and sages such as Swami Nikhilananda, Swami Siddheswarananda, gives us insights into the depths of discrimination which enable us "to recognize the essential nature of our true being". He also draws on the definitive texts such as the *Mandukya* and the *Brihadaranyaka Upanisads* as well as Sankaracharya's *Vivekacudamani*.

As regards the authorship of the Sanskrit book, the translator has taken the views of Swami Nikhilananda from his book *Drig- Drīśya-Viveka* published by Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama, Mysore. The transliteration of the Sanskrit text and the elaborate bibliographical appendix at the end inspire the reader to know more about the *Vedanta*. This work contrary to the jacket though, is not the first translation into English of *Drig-Drīśya-Viveka*.

The book is, however, a valuable addition to the Vedanta literature available in English and will surely awaken enquiry and discrimination in the minds of many readers.

Swami Brahmasthananda
R.K. Math, Hyderabad.

THE MANDUKYA UPANISHAD AND THE AGAMA SASTRA, by Thomas E.Wood, University of Hawaii Press, 2840, Kolo Walm Street, Honolulu, Hawaii-96822, Pp.240, \$14.00

In spite of its cardinal importance, the *Mandukya Upanisad* is not traditionally treated as an independent treatise; it is usually found embedded in the twenty-nine aphoristic verses which form a commentary on it. These twenty-nine verses form the first of four *prakaraṇas* (chapters) constituting the *Āgama Śāstra*. These *prakaraṇas* are attributed to Gaudapada, who is regarded as the Parama Guru of Acharya Shankara. Shankara is reputed to have written a commentary on the *Āgama Sastra*, the *Āgama Śāstra Vivaraṇa*.

The author of this scholarly work questions many of these commonly accepted views and adduces his reason for his stand. In his considered view, Gaudapada is not the author of the whole of the

prakaraṇas, especially the *Alāta-Śānti*; Gaudapada need not be the Parama Guru of Acharya Shankara; it is doubtful if such an individual was a Mayavadin at all; Shankara is not the author of the *A.S.Vivarana*. The writer cites from a number of Advaitic texts evidence in support of his conclusions.

One important question he discusses in detail is whether verse five in the *Mandukya Upaniṣad* relating to *Iṣvara* is a continuation of verse five dealing with *Suṣupti*, or it belongs to verse seven which describes the Self. He examines the two interpretations: associating *Iṣvara* with the state of sleep and therefore with the realm of Ignorance; treating *Iṣvara* as synonymous with the Self. He is convinced that the ascription of *Maya* to *Iṣvara* was a later development, possibly under the influence of Buddhism.

Speaking of *Maya*, he writes: "In the *Upaniṣads* *maya* means a unique power (*Śakti*) by which *Brahman* transforms Itself into the apparent multiplicity of the world, rather than a principle of ignorance or illusion... *Maya* does not mean 'illusion'; it is instead a power (*Śakti*) of transformation." (p.153)

Further, he observes: "We cannot have an Absolute without *Iṣvara*, for *Iṣvara* is essentially the active power which connects the Absolute with the phenomenal world which we experience through our physical senses — and the reality of this phenomenal world cannot sensibly be denied." (p.160) He cites from *Maitri Upaniṣad* (7.11.8) a significant passage: "The great Self (*Mahatman*) has dual nature (*dvaitabhāva*) for the sake of experiencing the true and the false."

It is indeed possible to controvert the author's conclusions and he is aware of it. But his approach and analysis are stimulating and throw a helpful light on the controversial subject of the *Āgama Prakaraṇas* and their position in the development of the *Vedānta*.

The appendices contain transliterated texts of the *Mandukya Upaniṣad*, *Āgama Prakaraṇas*, *Vaiṭathya*, *Advaita*, and *Alāta Śānti Prakaraṇas*. Elaborate notes and an accurate glossary add to the value of the work.

Sri M.P. Pandit
Pondicherry.

LONGING FOR DARKNESS, TARA & THE BLACK MADONNA - A Ten Year Journey in Search of the Female Face of God. by China Galland. Published by Random Century, London; 20 Vauxhall, Bridge Road, London, SW1V 2SA. 1990 £.16.99

The author makes clear some way into her book that the longing for darkness is a deeply felt human need that cuts across, goes beyond, and at the same time includes issues of ethnicity. Like light, darkness also has a wide range of symbolic meanings. It can be the darkness of ancient wisdom, of the shadow of the Most High or the stage (in Tibetan Buddhism) just before enlightenment. To say one is "longing for darkness" is to say that one longs for transformation.

China Galland grew up in a conservative family and always tried to do the conventional things, to be proper and timely. Without much savvy or preparation she married while very young, had soon two children, and then woke up to awful reality. One thing came after another — marital incompatibility, her own alcohol problem and addiction to prescribed medicines. Separation from her husband followed, then another marriage, another child and another divorce. The author began to search for some way back to normalcy. One thing she felt sure of though, that was she had had enough of men, male society and masculine religion. She became an idealist and a feminist, and began her search for the "female face of God".

Ms. Galland started an earnest study and practice of Zen Buddhism. One day at the Buddhist Centre in northern California, someone told her about a female Buddha in the Tibetan tradition. The deity was called Tara. Tara Devi had taken a vow aeons ago that in spite of opposing and dominating male opinion She would achieve enlightenment only in a woman's body, and She kept her vow. Buddha Tara was a very strong feminist. Galland pursued her study of Tara and found that the Hindu Saint Ramprasad (18th century Bengal) had worshiped Kali, Tara and Durga as one and the same Divinity, and regarded them all as the Supreme Being, God Himself/Herself. Could this be the Goddess also worshiped by the Christians as Mary, the Madonna, the Mother of Jesus? The author set out on a world tour that lasted ten years to find some answers she was looking for. In the beginning her quest led her to Nepal where Buddha Tara is

held in special reverence by many people, and then to India where His Holiness Tenzin Gyatso, the 14th Dalai Lama lives in exile. Subsequently the author travels also to Switzerland, to Czeszochowa (Poland), to France and to Yugoslavia to see if she could find out the elusive connection between all the female deities. Everywhere she notices — even in Czeszochowa, Texas, the dark complexioned Divine Mother revered and worshipped. Always the question haunts, "Are they all one? Whether in Buddhism, Hinduism or Christianity? Is God really the Mother of the universe also?"

Longing for Darkness, then, is both an interesting spiritual biography of the author and a travelogue—very attractive. Formerly the author had regarded Kali (Tara) Devi, in the downward spiral of alcoholism and drug addiction, as a wrathful destroyer. Now she intuits the sweet, loving and healing power of the Mother Goddess. She began to understand the oneness of Tara, Durga and the Black Madonna. Tara and the Black Madonna, she writes, are the carriers of a new awakening feminine psyche. We are just seeing the dawn of a much needed recognition of God as Mother. God can be worshipped as Mother with no loss of advantage to the human psyche, and this is as vital to men as to women. China Galland describes how this awareness came upon her during her travels.

About Mary, the author feels urgently, "Mary belongs to everyone.". We all need her. Humanity needs God as Mother..."I long to liberate Mary from the Catholic Church...". Only if Mary is disassociated from the confines of doctrine and dogma can she really evolve into a Goddess in her own right—for all humanity.

The author visits the Black Madonnas at Jasna Gora (Poland), Einsiedeln (Switzerland), Les-Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer (France), Medjugorje (Yugoslavia), and discovers her roots in Roman Catholic tradition. In doing so she also finds that Mary has already turned somewhat into a Universal Mother. She has tremendous power in eastern Europe. Ms. Galland visits Lech Walesa during the climactic phase of the Solidarity Movement in Poland and finds that the whole nation, including Lech Walesa, is being inspired by the Jasna Gora Madonna to work for peaceful and nonviolent change towards a fully democratic society. Complete adherence to nonviolence in

thought, word and action with unswerving steadiness in truth and right conduct is, the author believes, the real genius of leaders of Solidarity, and of the Dalai Lama, as it was of Mahatma Gandhi in India.

The very important, if not the outstanding point of *Longing For Darkness* is this very urgent social message that cuts across all national and cultural barriers. "Who" or "What" God is, known only to the few and to the mystics is not enough for our present age. Their insight and inspiration ... "needs to become our common understanding. Without it, we fall too easily into polarization, duality; we imagine that there is an 'other'. It is our mistaken notion of the *other* that threatens to destroy us as we imagine ourselves separate from and different than the world of nature, and from each other as beings who together share this fragile planet's fate." To the author this understanding can come to humanity better through God the Mother. She quotes the Dalai Lama in her closing pages: "Violence is unstable.... Revolutions may overthrow an existing system by force, but they have very little to offer as a new meaningful way of life. The reason is clear. Revolutionary movements that use violence mainly come from hatred, not from love. Such force is unstable. It cannot last over time, it only generates more of itself. In the long run, the only motivation that creates stability, lasting change, is loving kindness, compassion, nonviolence, and the altruistic desire to help others. These are the answers.

"Each individual must take responsibility for the human family. If we cannot eliminate, we can minimize the misfortunes and sufferings of others. Our individual salvation is just that, individual, but society's salvation is everyone's. A genuine altruistic attitude is the seed of a happy future. We must have patience."

China Galland is not a *Bhiksuni* or a saint. She is courageous and energetic and has presented a youthful view, somewhat self-conscious. At the same time her book is a hopeful, powerful suggestion that humanity is one, and together we can solve all problems. Love and truth, if practised, triumph. In so many societies round the world these will be good medicine.

Swami Shivaprasadananda

Practical Spirituality

The Logos of God is called flesh not only in as much as He became incarnate, but in another sense as well. When He is contemplated in His true simplicity, in His principal state with God the Father, although He embraces the models of the truth of all things in a distinct and naked manner, He does not contain within Himself parables, symbols and stories needing allegorical interpretation. But when He draws near to men who cannot with the naked state, He selects things which are familiar to them, combining together various stories, symbols, parables and dark sayings; and in this way He becomes flesh. Thus at the first encounter our intellect comes into contact not with the naked Logos but with the incarnate Logos, that is, with various sayings and stories. The incarnate Logos, though Logos by nature, is flesh in appearance. Hence most people think they see flesh and not the Logos, although in fact He is the Logos. The intellect — that is, the inner meaning — of Scripture is other than what it seems to most people.

The initial stages of learning about religious devotion are naturally related to the flesh. For in our first encounter with religion we come into contact with the letter and not the spirit. But as we get nearer to the spirit and refine the materiality of words with the more subtle forms of contemplation, we come to dwell — so far as this is possible for man — purely in the pure Chirst.

In Scripture the Logos of God is called and actually is dew, water spring and river, according to the subjective capacity of the recipient. To some He is dew because He quenches the burning energy of the passions which assails the body from without. To those seared in the depths of their being by the poison of evil He is water, not only because water through antipathy destroys its opposite but also because it bestows a vivifying power conducive to well-being. To those in whom the fountain of contemplative experience is continually active He is a spring bestowing wisdom. To those from whom flows the true teaching about salvation, He is river copiously watering men, domestic animals, wild beast and plants. That is to say, those who have remained human are uplifted by the conceptual images they have been given and are so deified; those made like domestic animals by the passions are restored to the human state by being shown the exact character of the virtuous way of life and so they recover their natural intelligence; those made like wild beasts by evil habits and actions are tamed by kind and tender counsel and return to their natural gentleness.

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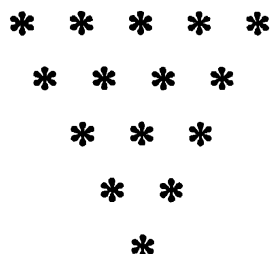
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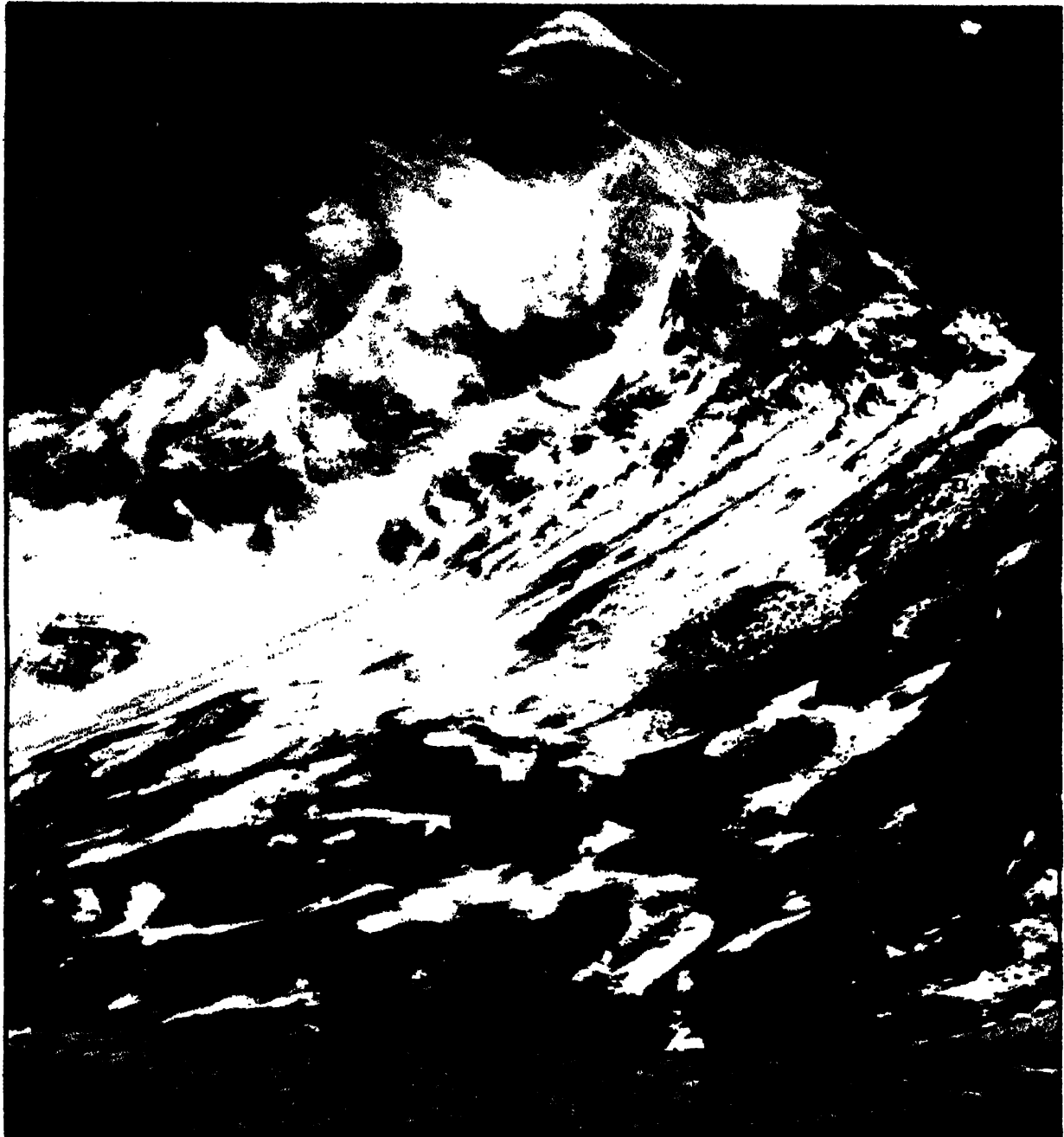
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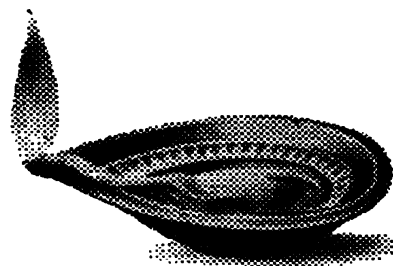
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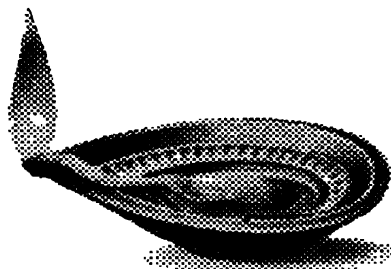
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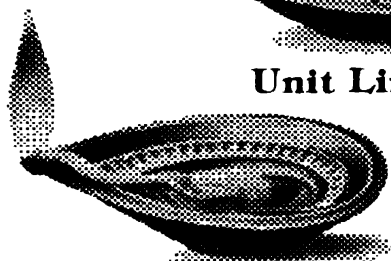
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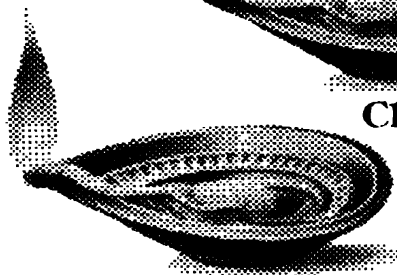
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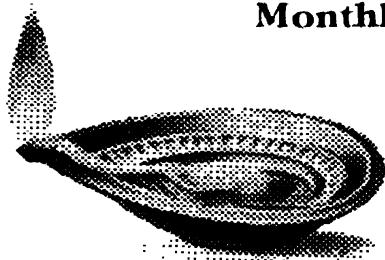
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—Swami Vivekananda

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VOL. 96

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No. 4

The Divine Message

BUDDHA REPLIES TO THE DEVA

On a certain day when the Blessed One dwelt at Jetavana, the garden of Anāthapindikā, a celestial deva came to him in the shape of a Brāhman whose countenance was bright and whose garments were white like snow. The deva asked questions which the Blessed One answered.

The deva said: "What is the sharpest sword? What is the deadliest poison? What is the fiercest fire? What is the darkest night?"

The Blessed One replied: "A word spoken in wrath is the sharpest sword; covetousness is the deadliest poison; passion is the fiercest fire; ignorance is the darkest night."

The deva said: "Who gains the greatest benefit? Who loses most? Which armor is invulnerable? What is the best weapon?"

The Blessed One replied: "He is the greatest gainer who gives to others, and he loses most who receives from others without giving a compensation. Patience is an invulnerable armor; wisdom is the best weapon."

The deva said: "Who is the most dangerous thief? What is the most precious treasure? Who is most successful in taking away by violence not only on earth, but also in heaven? What is the securest treasure-trove?"

The Blessed One replied: "Evil thought is the most dangerous thief; virtue is the

most precious treasure. The soul can take away by violence not only on earth, but also in heaven, and immortality is its securest treasure-trove."

The deva said: "What is attractive? What is disgusting? What is the most horrible pain? What is the greatest enjoyment?"

The Blessed One replied: "Good is attractive; evil is disgusting. A bad conscience is the most tormenting pain; deliverance is the height of bliss."

The deva asked: "What causes ruin in the world? What breaks off friendships? What is the most violent fever? Who is the best physician?"

The Blessed One replied: "Ignorance causes the ruin of the world. Envy and selfishness break off friendships. Hatred is the most violent fever, and Buddha is the best physician."

The deva then asked and said: "Now I have only one doubt to be solved; pray, clear it away: What is it fire can neither burn, nor moisture corrode, nor wind crush down, but is able to reform the whole world?"

The Blessed One replied: "Blessing! Neither fire, nor moisture, nor wind can destroy the blessing of a good deed, and it will reform the whole world."

Nataraja—The Cosmic Dancer

The idol of Nataraja is worshipped mainly in South India. In northern parts the Śiva-linga—the aniconic form of Śiva—has been popular since ancient times. The images worshipped in the temples of the South are not all alike, but slight variations can be noticed among them. Each temple, however, has been dedicated to one or another of the seven popular forms of dance. They are: *Kālikā*, *Gourī*, *Sandhyā*, *Pralaya*, *Tripura*, *Urdhva* and *Ānanda*. The last one, viz. *ānanda tāṇḍava*, has been more widely popular than any of the others. The Chidambaram Temple in Tamil Nadu is famous for the majestic and blissful *ānanda* dance of the Lord. This intricate dance pose for which Nataraja is most famous is called *tribhaṅgi* in the ancient dance treatise *Nāṭya Śāstra*. There are three delicate bends in the figure—one at the right knee, another at the hip and the third one at the neck. All the three bends—difficult for a dancer to perform simultaneously—are known as the *tribhaṅgi*. The eyes are slightly opened but the vision is turned inward like that of a great *yogin*. This reminds one of the famous photograph of Sri Ramakrishna with eyes open but gaze turned inward. This *Śāmbhavī mudrā* is thus explained by the Master himself: "The mind of the yogi is always fixed, always absorbed in the Self....His eyes are wide open, but with an aimless look, like the eyes of a mother bird hatching her eggs. Her entire mind is fixed on the eggs, and there is a vacant look in her eyes."

Nataraja's image also represents, surprisingly, the *Ardha Nārīśvara* aspect of Śiva.

In his left ear he wears a woman's earring -- *patrakuṇḍala* and a man's *makarkuṇḍala* in the right. Similarly, the fingers of the left hand and toes of the left foot are more slender than those of the right. The impersonal Divine Principle becomes personalized as half-male and half-female. The underlying divinity in all beings is neither male nor female, but in manifestation multiplicity cannot be denied till one realizes the single unitary Source that transcends all appearances and conceptions. The lofty truth that there is one Fountainhead, the Creator of every form in this universe, is brought home through the image of *Ardha Nārīśvara*. This has been aesthetically expressed in the figure of Nataraja. Śiva in his eternal dance is sublime poetry and that poetry is incomparable. It is a consummate vision of mystical inspiration.

A pertinent question that arises here is, why the medium of dance has been chosen to describe the activity of the Cosmos? Creativity or expression involves movement. When Śakti or Cosmic Energy stirs, it vibrates. What is potential becomes kinetic. Life is motion and that motion is in rhythmic movement. There is orderly movement in the cosmos. In the womb of an atom, subatomic particles are performing an energy dance, and in the bosom of these particles, *quarks*, the invisible fundamental building blocks of matter are also dancing.

Quantum physics calls the 'pre-matter' phase, the quantum wave function. Quantum waves can move. In fact they can move faster than light. And all waves must have rhythmic movement. There is nothing static anywhere in the universe. Matter is changing into energy and that energy is being transformed into matter. This truth—that the world is in constant flux—gave rise to the

'doctrine of momentariness' of Buddha. The body and mind are incessantly changing. Medical science tells us that the human body is just like a building whose bricks are systematically and continuously being taken out and replaced. The whole universe is engaged in one such self-creating and self-destroying dance of the elements.

Sage Bharata, who wrote the *Nāṭya-Sāstra*, describing the details of dramaturgy, acknowledged incorporating a great deal from Vedic rituals. These Vedic elements have sprung mainly from the depiction of Śiva and Brahmā. Śiva appears in the Vedas and in the subsequent Purāṇas as the Lord of Dance—the Dancer Par Excellence. He is often referred to as *Nṛityapriya*—the Lover of Dance; *Nartakaḥ*—the Dancer, *Nitya-nartakaḥ*, the Ever-Dancing. In addition he is also called the Great Musician. In *Śiva Śatarudra* there is a description of Śiva as *Sunartaka*, an excellent dancer. Pārvatī, Himavat's daughter, went to the forest and performed *tapas* to win the Lord. Pleased with her severe penances, Śankara revealed His resplendent Form to her and asked what was her desire. She said: "O Lord of gods, if you have compassion for me, then be my husband! You should come to my father's house. First ask him for my hand in the guise of a beggar and then make known your celestial glory." Accordingly, Śankara went to the palace of Himavat in the guise of a dancer. He carried a horn in his left hand and a drum in his right. He danced gleefully in the courtyard, singing an enchanting melody. All the people of the town became thrilled by his enchanting dance. When the Queen, Himavat's wife, wanted to reward him with precious stones, he refused and asked for her daughter as alms instead. At this Himavat and his Queen felt insulted; they wanted to throw the beggar out. Then Mahādeva showed His infinite splendour and vanished.

We find in the *Linga Purāṇa* another depiction of the Tāṇḍava dance by the Lord. Darukā, a cruel demon, had achieved his prowess through *tapas* and was slaughtering the gods and pious Brahmins. When the gods could not stop his carnage—knowing that the demon could only be killed by a woman, they approached Śiva and prayed to Him to destroy the terrible giant. Then the Lord asked the help of Umā to slay Darukā. Pārvatī then entered the body of Mahādeva and made for herself another body from the poison that stood in his throat. The great Goddess, assuming the terrible form of Kālī, destroyed Darukā and all other



Nataraja

demons. Her rage knew no bounds and the whole world trembled at the fire of her anger. In order to quell it and win back her graceful form, Śankara performed a frenzied tāṇḍava dance accompanied by all his companions.

There are wonderful passages in the *Kurma Purāṇa* which unfold the profound significance of the Dance of Śiva. Once, after instructing the Yogis, the Lord began to dance in ecstasy in the sky, showing his transcendental nature. The Yogis watched the dance of the Universal Soul, who impels the world, and who is the source of universal Māyā or illusion. Sages and Brāhmins saw Śankara dancing in the sky, that Supreme Liberator Who instantly releases people from their ignorance, Who is kind and benevolent to the devotees, the Supreme Lord, with a thousand heads, a thousand feet, a thousand arms and forms, with matted hair, the crown of Whose head is adorned by the crescent moon, clad in a tiger skin, holding a trident in His hand, with the sun, moon and fire enhancing His splendour. He blazed forth like ten million suns. Thus the Yogis and Sages watched the dance of the Lord Who fashions the universe.

The Yogis reverently prayed to Him : "We all worship You, sole Lord, Primordial Person, Lord of Breath. Your Yoga is eternal ; You reside in our hearts, are the atom, smaller than the smallest, and greater than the great. You are Everything. You are the Origin of all the *Vedas* and at the end of creation they will all come back to You. You are the Soul of Yoga, the Source of Consciousness, Who dance the celestial dance! We take refuge in You!" The *Purāṇa* drives home the truth of God's immanent and transcendental nature. And this Divine Dance of Śiva found its consummation in the exquisitely beautiful forms of Śiva-Natarāja.

The origin and growth of Indian dance drew its inspiration and nourishment from this mystical dance. It is said that Bharata was taught one hundred and eight modes of Natarāja's dance at the behest of Śiva. This tradition, which is more than two thousand years old, was an indispensable part of temple rituals. It was a sacred art performed with deep religious devotion, and accompanied by instrumental ensembles, captivated and elevated the minds of countless devotees who thronged the temples. Nurtured under royal patronage, reinforced by the admiration of enthusiastic devotees, and as a form of holy rite, dance not only effloresced into superbly beautiful and delightful art, but also was looked upon as a spiritual discipline and a means to enlightenment. The art of dance is not mere entertainment, but has spiritual efficacy. The end of the dramatic art, according to Bharata, is the moral improvement of those who witness it, not directly through sermons put into the mouths of performers, but indirectly by making the audience experience the goodness of the virtuous path through identification with the focus of the dramatic situation.

The rapturous dance of Krishna as cowherd, that of Sri Chaitanya and of Sri Ramakrishna stoke the fire of spiritual feeling in onlookers. "...but those who will not sing or dance, mad with God's name, will never attain God," said Sri Ramakrishna.¹ When *Bhāva*, or feeling reaches its deep intensity, it becomes *rasa*, divine love, unlocking the flood gates of the bliss of God. Therefore the *Sāṅḍilya Bhakti Sūtra* says, "*rasa* means Divine Love." The *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* also says that .. "*having rasa, one becomes full of bliss*." In dance and music this *Bhāva* quickly turns itself into *rasa* (Bliss) and profoundly affects the minds of

1. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Madras: Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, 1985) p. 186.

those who behold it in others. Saints like Mīra, Rāmprasād, Purandara Dās, Tyāgarāja and Tulsidās were not only inspired poets but also great musicians. They danced while they sang. Extolling dance and music, Sri Ramakrishna once remarked, "*If a person excels in singing, music, dancing or any other art, he can also quickly realize God, provided he strives sincerely.*"²

The art of dancing in India has a divine origin. It imitates the different dance postures of Śiva, or in its later development, of Krishna. A transcendent state of *ānanda* or bliss is its goal. The ultimate aim of human life is to realize that state of spiritual

beatitude. As all forms of art have their source and inspiration in God, their purpose or *raison d'être* is to lead again to Him. The fruition of art lies in the purification of the human psyche and in uplifting the human spirit to spiritual heights. Art and dance provide a fine medium for self-expression on the part of man to find his unity with the Cosmos and its Creator. In the words of Ananda Coomaraswami, one of the great exponents of Indian art, "The dominant motifs governing its evolution from the third century B.C. onwards, and up to the close of the eighteenth century, are devotion (*Bhakti*) and reunion (*Yoga*)."³

2. *Ibid.*, p. 427.

3. Ananda Coomaraswami, *The Dance of Shiva* (Bombay: Asia House, 1948) p. 49.

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Emerson's 'Brahma' in the Light of the Gita

DR. UMESH P. PATRI

Emerson's poem 'Brahma' reflects the quintessence of the Gita. The author, a teacher of English Literature at the D.A.V. College, Koraput, Orissa casts fresh light on the famous poem.

R. W. Emerson's poem 'Brahma' crystallizes many concepts taken from Indian sources. The poem was published in the first number of *The Atlantic Monthly* in November, 1857 and subsequently in the volumes of 1867 and 1876. It was a controversial poem from the very beginning because of what many took to be its anti-Christian attitude and its direct treatment of the Upaniṣadic mysticism. While discussing with his daughter about the controversy the poem had raised, Emerson said, perhaps in anger, "Tell them to say Jehovah instead of Brahma."¹ In 1876, when a selection of his poems was about to be published, Emerson's publishers asked him to change the title of the poem as it had aroused a lot of controversy. But Emerson refused to change it. Regarding the unchristian attitude of the poem—according to Robert L. White: "... 'Brahma' suggests that Emerson's most controversial poem is primarily anti-Christian but [is actually] addressed to his contemporary Christian audience in an attempt to explain his own personal rejection of the Christian dogma that the proper end of man is heaven."² The poem was not properly understood by critics because they were not familiar with the Hindu thought. Professor Brown, with evident bias, commented that "the poem is the greatest transcendental nonsense it had ever been his fortune to encounter."³ Even

a great writer like Carlyle described it as 'pale moonshine'.⁴ The poem could not be understood and consequently went unappreciated by Emerson's contemporaries (not by the Transcendentalists of course) because of their colossal ignorance about Hindu Philosophy. R. L. Rusk writes: "'Brahma' provoked the laughter of those who were ignorant of Hindu lore and they must have composed most of the readers of *The Atlantic*."⁵

Critics like W. T. Harris,⁶ W. S. Kennedy,⁷ F. I. Carpenter,⁸ A. Christy,⁹ L. Goren,¹⁰ and K. R. Chandrasekharan,¹¹ who have written about the poem are all almost unanimous in the view that the poem could not have been written without the influence of the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* and the *Bhagavad*

4. *Ibid.*

5. Ralph L. Rusk, *The Life of Ralph Waldo Emerson* (New York: Scribner, 1949) p. 396.

6. W. T. Harris, "Emerson's Orientalism", *Concord Harvest*, ed. K. W. Cameron (Hartford: Transcendental Books, 1970) I, pp. 187-90.

7. William Sloan Kennedy, "Clues to Emerson's Mystic Verse", *American Transcendental quarterly*, Part 3, (Winter, 1976), pp. 2-20.

8. Frederic Ives Carpenter, *Emerson and Asia* (New York: Haskell House, 1968).

9. Arthur E. Christy, *The Orient in American Transcendentalism: A Study of Emerson, Thoreau and Alcott* (New York: Octagon Books, 1963).

10. L. Goren, "Elements of Brahminism in the Transcendentalism of Emerson", *ESQ*, (Supplement to No. 34, 1st Qtr., 1964) pp. 34-35.

11. K. R. Chandrasekharan, "Emerson's Brahma: An Indian Interpretation", *The New England Quarterly*, Vol. 33, No. 4, (December, 1960) pp. 506-12.

1. Robert L. White, "Emerson's Brahma", *The Explicator*, XXI (April, 1963), No. 8, Item 63.

2. *Ibid.*

3. Charles Malloy, "A Study of Emerson's Major Poems" (Brahma), *American Transcendental Quarterly* I, (Summer, 1974), p. 62.

Gītā. F. I. Carpenter says that 'Brahma' expresses the fundamental Hindu concept of God "...more clearly and concisely than any other writing in the English language—perhaps better than any writing in Hindu literature itself."¹² W. T. Harris is equally eulogistic. For him the poem is "a wonderful summary of the spirit of the Indian mind." He further says: "There is no subject farther from the thought of the average common sense of the modern European or American than the all-absorbing unity which the East Indian conceived under the name *Brahma*."¹³

I am giving below the full text of the poem so that when I analyse it in terms of its content of Hindu thought, the lines can be conveniently referred to:

BRAHMA

If the red slayer think he slays,
Or if the slain think he is slain,
They know not well the subtle ways
I keep, and pass, and turn again.
Far or forgot to me is near;
Shadow and sunlight are the same;
The vanished gods to me appear;
And one to me are shame and fame.
They reckon ill who leave me out;
When me they fly, I am the wings;
I am the doubter and the doubt,
And I the hymn the Brahmin sings.
The strong gods pine for my abode,
And pine in vain the sacred Seven;
But thou, meek lover of the good!
Find me, and turn thy back on heaven.¹⁴

The title of the poem has created a certain amount of confusion. 'Brahma' (the Impersonal Absolute) has been often mistaken for

'*Brahmā*' (the creator god). F. I. Carpenter says that by 'Brahma', the impersonal creative force of the world is represented as the speaker.¹⁵ By this Carpenter understands 'Brahma' as 'Brahmā' (with long 'a'), the creator god of the Hindu trinity (*Brahmā-Viṣṇu-Śiva*). This mistake has been rightly pointed out by K. R. Chandrasekharan.¹⁶ *Brahma* actually means the Universal Soul, the Absolute or 'Over-Soul'. The poem does not have any reference to *Brahmā*, the creator god, but it embodies all the attributes and qualities of the Impersonal Ultimate Reality beyond the gods and goddesses, *Brahma*. Chandrasekharan's observation that the proper title should have been '*Brahman*' is not necessarily correct, for *Brahma* and *Brahman* are synonymous.

Emerson got the central idea for his poem from reading the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* which was included in the *Bibliotheca Indica* (Calcutta, 1852). The following verse from *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* clearly forms the basis of the first few lines:

*Hantā cen manyate hantum hatas cen
manyate hatam,
ubhau tau na vijanto naḥ hanti na
hanyate.*¹⁷

If the slayer thinks I slay, if the slain thinks I am slain, then both of them do not know well. It (the soul) does not slay nor is it slain.¹⁸

Subsequently, Emerson noted down this

12. Carpenter, *Emerson and Asia*, p. 113.

13. Harris, "Emerson's Orientalism", p. 187.

14. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Principal Upaniṣads* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1968) 616. (*Kaṭha*, I: 2.19).

15. This translation is the original one which Emerson read in *Bibliotheca Indica* (Calcutta: 1852). See W. S. Kennedy, "Clues to Emerson's Mystic Verse", *American Transcendental Quarterly*, 3, (Winter, 1976) p. 6.

12. Carpenter, *Emerson and Asia*, p. 111.

13. Harris, "Emerson's Orientalism", p. 187.

14. *Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1903) IX, p. 195 (Brahma).

idea in his Journals in various contexts.¹⁹ This same Upaniṣadic theme has also been employed with a slight modification in the *Bhagavad Gītā*:

*Ya enam veti hantārāṇ yaścainam
manyate hatam
ubhau tau na vijānīto nā yaṁ hanti na
hanyate.*

*Na jayate mriyate vā kadācin . .
nā yaṁ bhūtvā bhavitā vā na bhūyaḥ.
Ajo nityaḥ śāśvato yaṁ purāṇo
na hanyate hanyamāne śarīre.*

He who holds Atman as slayer and he who considers It as slain, both of them are ignorant. It slays not, nor is It slain.

The Atman is neither born nor does It die. Coming into being and ceasing to be do not take place in It. Unborn, eternal, constant and ancient, It is not killed when the body is slain.²⁰

The phrase 'red slayer' is, however, Emerson's own coinage and refers to any slayer whose hands are gory with human blood. The image is a vivid one and brings before us the picture of a killer who is smeared with blood and consequently looks red. The image of the *Kṣatriya* warriors of old who were professional fighters may have prompted Emerson to coin the expression 'red slayer'. K. R. Chandrasekharan, however, gives a different interpretation to the words. He compares the 'red slayer' to Rudra, the god of destruction (another name of Śiva), which is not at all appropriate.²¹ Emerson puts these words into the mouth of the

Absolute or Over-soul, who is the Supreme (Impersonal) Being, though it would have been more appropriate to have them from the mouth of the speaker of the *Bhagavad Gītā*, Lord Krishna. He being an immanent form of the Absolute (*Kṛṣṇastu bhagavān svayam*). Krishna Himself is God, or the Absolute. The poem is a justification of the transcendent ways of Brahman, or Over-soul, to man and expresses a higher truth which is not likely to be understood by an ordinary human being. Arjuna was puzzled because for him the slain and the slayer were different and real. This puzzlement arose out of his egoism, or subject-object duality. A man who is dominated by the ego would call himself a doer, but in the ultimate analysis there is no difference between the soul who acts and the soul who is acted upon. The slayer and the slain, the doubter and the doubt are one.

In the second stanza the influence of another Upaniṣadic verse is clearly discernible. In the Upaniṣads there are many paradoxical descriptions of Brahman. The Upaniṣads say that Brahman moves and does not move; He is far and He is near. The following verse declares the paradoxical nature of Brahman:

*Tad cjati tan naijati tad dūre tad vantike
tad antarasya sarvasya tad u sarvasyāsya
bāhyataḥ.*

It moves and It moves not; It is far and It is near; It is within all this and It is also outside all this.²²

In the Supreme Being, the Brahman, the ordinary mental contrasts such as distance and nearness (which imply space), past and present (which imply time), light and darkness, shame and fame, victory and defeat, do not exist. All pairs of opposites and

19. Emerson, *Journals*, ed., E. W. Emerson and W. E. Forbes (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1909.14) VI, 1844, p. 494; 1845, VII, p. 127.

20. *The Bhagavad Gītā*, Tr. Swami Chidbhavananda (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Tapovanam, 1969) pp. 138-39. (II: 19-20).

21. Chandrasekharan, p. 507.

Principal Upaniṣads, p. 571 (Isa, 5).

conflicts vanish in It. The earthly differences which are relative in nature are all embraced by the Unity of Brahman. The concept of good and bad has its basis in human thought and reasoning ; likewise all the other contrasting principles. Pleasure and pain, success and failure, life and death are dichotomies which are all, in the ultimate analysis, illusory notions. There is no such thing as an improvement from some position. If it is there, it is only apparent. Alan Watts, explaining the point, is worth quoting:

The illusion of significant improvement arises in moments of contrast, as when one turns from the left to the right on a hard bed. The position is 'better' so long as the contrast remains; but before long the second position begins to feel like the first. So one acquires a more comfortable bed and, for a while, sleeps in peace. But the solution of the problem leaves a strange vacuum in one's consciousness, a vacuum soon filled by the sensation of another intolerable contrast, hitherto unnoticed, and just as urgent, just as frustrating as the problem of the hard bed. The vacuum arises because the sensation of comfort can be maintained only in relation to the sensation of discomfort, just as an image is visible to the eye only by reason of a contrasting background. The good and the evil, the pleasant and the painful, are so inseparable, so identical in their difference—like the two sides of a coin.²³

The above explains clearly how the opposing principles such as good and bad are really illusory notions. A Zen poem says: "The conflict between right and wrong is the sickness of the mind." The fundamental idea of Buddhism is to transcend these

earthly opposites. In the *Bhagavad Gītā*, Sri Krishna has repeatedly talked about going beyond the world of opposites.²⁴ Modern physics has shown us that at the sub-atomic level the distinction between matter and energy disappears ; there matter appears both as particle and wave. On that level force and matter are unified. The Brahman or Over-soul is such a unity where all distinctions disappear. Emerson, in his poem 'Celestial Love' describes this unity:

Where good and ill,
And joy and moan,
Melt into one.
There Past, Present, Future, shoot
Triple blossoms from one root ;
Substances at base divided,
In their summits are united.²⁵

In another poem, 'Wood-Notes', he also expresses such a concept:

Alike to him the better, the worse
The glowing angel, the outcast corse.²⁶

The third stanza is clearly inspired by the tenth chapter of the *Bhagavad Gītā*, wherein Lord Krishna gives a long catalogue of things in which he is present as the Supreme Being. The last line of the stanza is especially similar to the line in the *Gītā*:

Vedānām sāmavedo'smi... Of the
Vedas I am the *Sāma*; I am *Vāsava*
among the devas ; of the senses I am the
mind and among living beings I am
consciousness.²⁷

(Continued on page 178)

23. A. W. Watts, *The Way of Zen* (1957 ; rpt. England: Penguin Books. 1975) pp. 136-37.

24. *The Bhagavad Gītā*, II. 56-57.

25. *Complete Works*, IX, page 115 (The Celestial Love).

26. *Ibid.* p. 59 (Wood-Notes) II.

27. *Bhagavad Gītā*, X. 22.

The Gayatri Mantra Upasana

SWAMI MUKHYANANDA

No other Vedic Mantra occupies an exalted place as that of the Gāyatrī. The author, a great scholar, gives us an indepth analysis and explains lucidly the profound import of this mystic formula. Swami Mukhyananda is the author of a number of valuable books in English. He is a monk of the Ramakrishna Order at Belur Math.

1. Introduction

A *Mantra*, generally, is a short mystic formula, consisting of a Prayer or divine Name, used for *Upāsana* (contemplation or meditation) or *Japa* (repetition) in spiritual practice, transmitted by a Guru or a competent spiritually evolved person. The Mantra becomes efficient and acquires spiritual potency (*Siddha-Mantra*) if it is transmitted in a *Dīkṣhā* (Initiation) ritual by one who himself/herself has been practising it for long, having received it traditionally. Sometimes long hymns (*Stotra*-s) and spirituo-religious texts, especially in verse form, are also considered as *Mālā-Mantra*-s (garland of mantra-s) and are used for holy recitation either daily, periodically, or on special occasions. These need not require traditional transmission, though one can learn from experts the art of effective and pleasing spiritual recitation or chanting. The entire *Samhitā* portion of the Vedas is also called 'Mantra', and these Mantra-s are used in Vedic rituals.

Etymologically, 'Mantra' is defined as '*Mananāt trāyate iti mantrah*'; i.e. that which saves (*trāyate*) one spiritually if it is contemplated upon (*mananāt*). *Upāsanā* consists in intimate and intense contemplation on the meaning and significance of the Mantra and the Deity represented by it, keeping in view the purpose for which the Mantra is intended. Literally, *Upāsana* means sitting

(*Āsana*) or placing oneself (mentally) near (*Upa-*) to the object of contemplation or meditation. '*Yat dhyāyati tat bhavati*' (Whatever one intensely contemplates or meditates upon, that one becomes) is the psychological law. It is laid down in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (I.i. 10), "That which is done with faith, conviction, and knowledge, and understanding its inner significance, that alone acquires greater power and potency."¹ *Japa* of a Mantra consists in its repetition with *Niṣṭhā* (Earnestness), *Śhraddhā* (Faith), and *Viśhvāsa* (Conviction) "keeping in mind its meaning and spiritual significance".² *Japa* may be done independently or as part of the *Upāsana*.

2. The Gāyatrī-Mantra

The *Gāyatrī-Mantra*, called also the '*Sāvitrī-Mantra*', occurs in its original form in the Vedas (*R̥g-Veda*, III, 62. 10), and is considered to be their very essence, or even their Mother (*Gāyatrī Veda-mātā*). When

1. "*Yadeva vidyayā karoti, śraddhayā upaniṣadā, tadeva viryavattaram bhavati.*" The *Gītā* also says: "*Yo yat śraddhā sa eva sah.*" (As one's *Śraddhā* is, so he becomes). Another significant spiritually didactic verse declares: "In regard to a Mantra, a place of pilgrimage, a sage, and a Guru, one attains results according to one's attitude."

2. "*Tat-jupah tad-artha-bhāvanam*"—*Pātanjala Yoga-Sūtras*, I, 28.

later on OM was associated with it, (which is also considered as the Source of the Vedas) and the *Gāyatrī* was treated as its elaboration, OM was prefixed to the Mantra along with the three *Vyāhṛti*-s (Utterances of the Divine Creator) representing the Three Cosmic World-Planes—*Bhūr-Bhuvah-Svah* (Cf. *Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, V. 14.1-8 and *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, II. 23. 2-3; III. 12).³

The *Gāyatrī*-Mantra in full, repeated mystically, runs as follows:

OM BHUR-BHUVAH-SVAH
TAT-SAVITUR-VARENYAM
BHARGO DEVASYA DHĪMAHI;
DHIYO YO NAH PRACHODAYAT.

OM, We meditate (dhīmahī) on the adorable spiritual effulgence (vareṇyam bhargah)

3. Yogi-Yājñavalkya says: "At the time of creation, by the Self-Existent One Himself were uttered (*Vyāhṛtā*) with His Knowledge-body (*Jñāna-deha*) the words: '*Bhūr-Bhuvah-Svah*', and the three World-Planes came into being immediately. Hence they are called *Vyāhṛti*-s." (Cf. in the Bible: "God said, '*Let there be light*', and there was light.")

The *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* says: "Prajāpati (the Vedic 'Lord of Creation'), at the time of Creation, brooded, (made *Tapas* or meditated) on the Worlds. From them, thus brooded, issued forth the threefold Veda (as their essence). He brooded on this. From this, thus brooded upon, issued forth the Mystic Syllables (*Vyāhṛti*-s) *Bhūh*, *Bhuvah*, and *Svah*. He brooded on them. From them, thus brooded upon, issued forth (as their essence) the Mystic Word OM. Just as all the parts of the leaf are permeated by the ribs of the leaf, so are all words permeated by the *OM-kāra*. Verily, the *OM-kāra* is all this—yea, the *OM-kāra* is verily all this." (II. 23. 2-3).

In course of time, the three *Vyāhṛti*-s were raised to seven, by sub-dividing *Svah* into *Svah*. *Mahah*, *Janah*, *Tapah*, and *Satyam*, corresponding to the five higher Worlds. Along with *Bhūh* and *Bhuvah*, these are used in the Mantra-s of the *Sandhyā* and other rituals. (Cf. the last para in the passage quoted from the *Mahānārāyaṇa Upaniṣad* later on).

of That Supreme Divine Being who is the Source or Projector (tat savituh devasya) of the three phenomenal cosmic world-planes—the gross or physical (Bhūh), the subtle or psychical (Bhuvah), and the causal or potential (Svah), both macrocosmically (externally) and microcosmically (internally). May that Supreme Divine Being (Tat, Yo) stimulate (prachodayāt) our (nah) intelligences (dhiyah), [so that we may realize the Supreme Truth].

The *Gāyatrī*-Mantra is the greatest prayer-mantra which incorporates all the ideas of the OM (AUM) symbolism (given here briefly) and prays to the supreme infinite Divine Being for the enlightenment of the intelligence (*Dhī*) of all human beings to enable mankind to realize the Supreme Truth. It is also known as the *SAVITRI-MANTRA*, since it is addressed to the Divine Person in the SUN, who is considered as the visible symbolic representation of the SUPREME DIVINITY, for He destroys darkness and promotes life, even as the Supreme Divinity destroys all spiritual ignorance, leading to Eternal Life or Immortality. The Deity in the Sun is also identified with the inner Self of man.⁴

Sāvitrī signifies that which is related to *Savitṛi* (*Savitā*); *Savitā* means the Sun as

4. In the *Iṣa Upaniṣad*, verse 15, the *Sādṛhaka* (Spiritual Aspirant) prays to the Sun: "Like a golden disc, Thy shining orb covers the Face of Truth. Remove it, O Sun, so that I who am devoted to virtue and Truth may behold It." In the next verse, continuing the prayer he affirms the identity of the Self within him with the Universal Self manifested through the Sun: 'O Sun! the offspring of Prajāpati (the Lord of Beings) Thou lonely courser of the heavens, Thou controller and supporter (*Pūṣan*) of all, contract Thy dazzling rays. With Thy Grace, may I behold the most blessed and luminous (*Tejah*) form of Thine. I am indeed He, that Supreme Being who dwells there in Thee (*Yo 'sāvasau Puruṣah so-aham-asmī*)."

well as the Source or Originator who brings forth (*Sav*) the universe. The *Sāvitrī-Mantra* is composed in the *Gāyatrī* metre, and it being the best and most significant Mantra in that metre in the Vedas, it has become famous as 'The *Gāyatrī*'.

The *Gāyatrī-Mantra*, being the most universal, non-personal, holy prayer, can be used by any person belonging to any country, irrespective of race, religion or sex.⁵

In course of time, just as the *OM-kāra* was personified into *Gajānana* or *Gaṇeśha*, for personal *Upāsana* (*Saguṇa-Upāsana*),⁶ the *Gāyatrī* also was personified into the Goddess *Gāyatrī* (*Gāyatrī Devī*), as the Presiding Deity (*Adhiṣṭhāna-Devatā*) of the Mantra, for purposes of *Saguṇa Upāsana*. (See footnote No. 10).

3. *OM and the Gāyatrī-Mantra*

Since the *Gāyatrī-Mantra* is intimately associated with *OM* and is considered an elaboration of it—in fact *OM* is considered to be of such supreme importance that it is

5. In the *Śukla Yajur-Veda* (XXVI. 2), it is urged to spread the beneficent words (*Vācham kalyāṇīm*) of the Vedas to all the people without distinction of caste, creed, or sex, even to people of other religions:

(Just as I am speaking these blessed words to the people (without distinction), in the same way you all also spread these words among all men and women—the *Brāhmaṇa*-s. *Kṣatriya*-s *Śūdra*-s, *Vaiśya*-s and all others, whether they be our own people or aliens.)—quoted by Swami Vivekananda in his speech 'The Religion We Are Born In' (Cf. *Complete Works*, Vol. III. p. 457).

Now the time has come, as declared by Swami Vivekananda, that the Vedas and the *Gāyatrī-Mantra* must be propagated among all as before, irrespective of caste, creed, sex, or religion or race.

6. In regard to this personification of *OM* as *Gajānana* and also for a detailed treatment of *OM*, *Gāyatrī*, and *Sandhyā*, see the present author's book with this title published by the Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Madras 600-004.

generally pre-fixed to all the other Mantra-s—, we may briefly throw some light on it here.

OM or *AUM* is the most comprehensive, universal, non-personal, holy sound symbol (*Logos* or *Name*) of the Supreme Infinite Divine Reality. This Divine Reality, which is Spiritual, is of the nature of *Ananta-Sat-Chit-Ānanda* (Absolute Infinite-Existence-Consciousness-Bliss). It manifests as the Totality of Existence—from the external most Physical to the internal most Spiritual—on Four Cosmic Planes, Macrocosmic (Universal) as well as Microcosmic (Individual) viz.:

(A) *On the Macrocosmic or Universal Plane:*

1. Our empirical universe with its different types of beings, designated the *Bhūh* or *Bhūr-loka*; the gross or physical plane.

2. The intermediate regions with the *Manes* and other subtle invisible beings which are apprehended psychically, designated *Bhuvah* or *Bhuvar-loka*; the Subtle or Psychical Plane.

3. The several heavens (*Svah* or *Svar-loka*), (also spelt *Suvah*, *Suvar-loka*) with the different types of angels and gods, including the Highest Heaven, called the Abode of Truth (*Satya-loka*), with the Supreme Personal God, to be envisioned spiritually; the Causal or Potential Plane.

4. The above three Planes together constitute the entire Phenomenal Cosmic Universe, called the *Brahmāṇḍa*. Beyond *Brahmāṇḍa* is the *Noumenal non-Personal Absolute Spirit*, designated *Brahman* (The Infinite), which is *Supra-Corporeal* and is beyond all Worlds and Heavens (*Lokottara*).

That is the Fourth Plane, the Absolute (*Turiya*). It is Pure Infinite Spiritual Existence, the source of the other three, and not any Region or Person.

(B) *On the Microcosmic or Individual Plane:*

The Gross, Subtle, and Causal bodies of the individual and the Ātman within, transcending them, represent the Four Planes.

The sound-symbol AUM represents all the above Four Planes in a nutshell for meditation purposes to help visualize them in life. OM is also the Primeval Sound; hence it is called the *Praṇava*, which also signifies (*Vāchaka*) Brahman (*Tasya vāchakaḥ Praṇavaḥ*). OM is often referred to as *Śhabda-Brahman*, Brahman in the form of the *Śhabda* (Sound, Logos) or Word (Vedas).

The syllable OM consists of three letters. In Sanskrit when A (अ) and U (उ) are combined, it gives us the O sound as in *go*, and adding M (म) to it we get the OM. A + U + M are symbolic of the beginning, middle, and end of all the words, since we utter A (अ) when we open the mouth and M (म) is uttered with the closing of the lips, and U (उ) rolls through from the throat in the middle—and all our words are uttered between these three. Now, AUM is symbolic not only of all the words, *but of the Worlds (Loka-s)* as well, for meditation purposes. They represent the three Planes of *Bhūh*, *Bhuvah* and *Svah*. (See footnote No. 7) When OM is uttered mystically, the inarticulate humming sound that lingers (as when a gong is sounded) represents the *Absolute* beyond the Words and Worlds (*Lokottara*), the Fourth Plane (*Turiya*). Thus AUM is symbolic of entire Existence, phenomenal as well as noumenal. Hence OM is considered as the designation of the Infinite Supreme Divinity, and is held to be the holiest universal *Name*.

4. *Importance of Gāyatrī-Mantra*

Om and the Gāyatrī-Mantra have acquired such great importance that they are often referred to as '*The Praṇava*' and '*The Gāyatrī*', respectively. In the *Vedas*, *Upaniṣads*, and the *Gītā*, and in later Sanskrit religious literature, there are numerous references to their holiness, importance, and significance. We shall give here only a few quotations, mainly regarding the Gāyatrī:

(a) *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, III. 12:

"Gāyatrī indeed is all this, whatever being exists. Speech indeed is Gāyatrī; for speech indeed sings and removes fear of all this that exists. ...Such is the greatness of this Gāyatrī."

(b) *Maitrī Upaniṣad*, VI. 2: (Also called *Maitreyī Up.*, *Maitrāyaṇī Up.*)

"These two, the Spirit within and the Sun, go forth toward each other; one should reverence them with the Word OM, with the Mystic Utterances (*Vyāhṛiti-s*) *Bhūr*, *Bhuvah*, *Svah*, and with the *Sāvitrī* (Gāyatrī) Prayed."

(c) *Maitrī Upaniṣad*, VI. 7:

Worship of the Ātman in the form of the Sun by the use of the *Sāvitrī Prayer*

"*Taḥ savitur vareṇyam* (That Adorable Splendour of That *Sāvitrī*—the Originator of the Universe):

"Yonder Sun, verily is *Sāvitrī* (a visible symbol). He, verily, is to be sought thus by one seeking Ātman"—say the expounders of Brahman.

"*Bhargo devasya dhīmahi* (May we meditate upon That Splendour of the Divinity):

"*Sāvitrī*, verily, is the Divinity. Hence upon that which is called His Splendour do we meditate"—say the expounders of Brahman.

"*Dhiyo yo nah prachodayāt* (And may He inspire our thoughts);

"Thoughts, verily, are meditations. And may He inspire these for us"—say the expounders of Brahman.

(d) *Mahānārāyaṇa Upaniṣad* (Sections XXXIII, XXXIV, XXXV):

"The One-syllabled OM is Brahman. (Of this Gāyatrī-Mantra) Agni is its Deity. Its Ṛṣi is also Brahman. Its metre is Gāyatrī. Its application is for the union with *Paramātmā* (Supreme Ātman).

"May the Boon-conferring Gāyatrī (*Varadā Devī*) come to us (in order to instruct us about) the Imperishable Brahman who is revealed by the Vedas. May Gāyatrī, the Mother of Metres (Mantra-s) (*Chhandasām-Mātā*), favour us with the Knowledge of the Supreme Brahman alluded to.

"O Gāyatrī! Thou art the Vigour, Thou art the Stamina, Thou art the Strength, and Thou art the Brilliance in all. Thou art the origin and sustenance of Gods. Thou art the Universe and its duration. Thou art all that exist and their span of life. Thou surpassest everything. Thou art the TRUTH denoted by the Praṇava. I invoke Thee as Gāyatrī (Giver of Illumination); I invoke Thee as Sāvitrī (Giver of Life); I invoke Thee as Sarasvatī (Giver of Knowledge and Wisdom).

"OM *Bhūh*, OM *Bhuvah*, OM *Svah*; OM *Mahah* (the Region of Spiritual Light); OM *Janah* (the place of Origin of Universe); OM *Tapah* (the Region of Higher Knowledge and Meditation); OM *Satyam* (the Abode of Truth). OM, May we meditate on the Adorable Splendour of That Supreme Divine Source of All to quicken our Understanding. OM, It is the Causal Waters, Light, Bliss, Ambrosia, Brahman, and also the

Three Cosmic World-Planes. All these are verily OM."

(e) *Vyāsa Smṛiti*:

"Gāyatrī is considered non-different from Brahman. As such one should contemplate 'I am That' (or 'I am He') (*So-aham-asmī*), as prescribed (with a sense of identity)." "She is called Gāyatrī because one who chants the Mantra is freed from all blemishes (*Gayantam trāyate*)."

5. *Gāyatrī-Mantra in Sandhyā-Upāsanā*

We have already stated that OM is regarded as the *Śabdā-Brahman* (Brahman in the form of the Word or Logos), representing the Vedas, and the Gāyatrī-Mantra is considered as the elaboration of OM and 'Boon-conferring Mother of the Vedas' (*Varadā Veda-Mātā*), the Vedas being held as further elaboration of the Gāyatrī.⁷

7. The sound OM is produced by the combination of the three sounds: A (अ); U (उ); M (म). These are the three *Mātrā*-s (Moras or phonetic components) of OM; further there is the *Ardha-Mātrā* (half-mora) or A-Matra (non-mora), the light inarticulate humming sound which still lingers even when the audible sound dies away (like on the sounding of a gong), and which can be detected only by fine perception and concentration. This sound is spontaneous and primeval and is designated 'Un-created' or 'Unstruck-Sound' (*Anāhata-Dhvanī*), which represents the Absolute.

OM, the Sound-symbol of Brahman, being the Logos, is considered to be the first sound emanating at the beginning of creation. From the three *Mātrā*-s of OM came out the three 'feet' of the Gāyatrī. (The *Sāvitrī*-s in Gāyatrī metre and the 'feet' refer to its parts. Since this Mantra in the Gāyatrī metre was considered very holy and became famous, it has become well known as *The Gāyatrī*, just as Gīta means 'song'; but since the *Bhagavad-Gītā* became very famous, it is referred to as '*The Gītā*', while there are more than 30 other *Gītā*-s.) And from its three 'feet' came out the three Vedas and the three *Vyāhṛti*-s, *Bhūr-Bhuvah-Svah*, representing the three Cosmic World-Planes. From A (of OM), came out '*Tat Savitur Vareṇyam*',

Because of its supreme spiritual significance, the *Japa* and *Upāsana* of the Gāyatrī-Mantra has been incorporated as the essential part of a daily prayer-ritual known as *Sandhyā*. The Gāyatrī-Mantra is addressed to the Supreme Divinity with the Sun as the symbol, and so is the *Sandhyā* Prayer-ritual. Yogi-Yājñavalkya says: "That which is the *Sandhyā*, that verily is the Gāyatrī—existing in these two forms (ritual and contemplation)." The *Taittīriya Brāhmaṇa* says: "By performing the *Sandhyā*, meditating on the rising and the setting Sun intensely with esoteric knowledge that He is the symbol of Brahman, a wise devoted person attains all that is good and auspicious (*Sakalam bhadam aśnute*)."

Being in the nature of contemplation, the *Sandhyā*-ritual is classed as *Upāsana* or spiritual contemplation. This *Upāsana* is prescribed to be performed thrice a day at the conjunction (*Sandhi*) times of the night and dawn (*Pūrvāhna*), forenoon and afternoon (*Madhyāhna*), and evening (sunset) and night (*Sāyāhna*), lasting 48 minutes at each conjunction. (Those who cannot do in *Madhyāhna* can drop it in modern times.) Because the *Upāsana* is done at the conjunction times (*Sandhyā*), it is designated as the *Sandhyā-Upāsana*. It is also called *Sandhyā-Vandanā* (adoration or worship), and often merely *Sandhyā*, for short.

which expanded itself into the *R̥g-Veda* and the Cosmic Plane *Bhūh*; from U, 'Bhargo Devasya Dhimahi', which expanded itself into *Yajur-Veda* and the Plane of *Bhuvah*; and from M, 'Dhiyo yo nah pracodayāt', which expanded itself into *Sāma-Veda*, and the Plane of *Svah*. The first *Veda* is *Stuti-para* (devoted to Devotion), the second is *Kriyā-para* (devotion to Work), and the third is *Jñāna-para* (devoted to Knowledge). So by the meditation upon the different Mātrā-s different ends are attained according to the significations of the Mātrā-s. But when the mind is concentrated upon the A-Mātrā, the Transcendental Supreme Brahman is realized.

Why is the *Sandhyā* or conjunction time chosen for this *Upāsana*? Man as a Micro-cosm comprises all the four aspects of the Total Existential Reality. His body, mind, and intellect are parts and parcel of the phenomenal Nature. Hence the external conditions in nature affect his constitution also. When external nature is quiet, the internal nature also tends to be so. Therefore, in all spiritual practices advantage is taken of the propitious external conditions in nature, including manifestation of special astronomical phenomena such as newmoon and fullmoon days, eclipses, etc., for fixing the times of prayer, *Upāsana*, meditation, rituals, etc. For instance, if one's boat goes along with the tide, taking advantage of it, it advances quickly without much effort. Hence, the *Sandhyā*-ritual is fixed at the conjunction times, when significant changes occur in external and internal nature. Psychologically too, if we are properly attuned, the great changes in nature make us think of the cosmos as a whole and contemplate on the glorious Spiritual Sun within, rising above our usual parochial circle of individuality and ego.

The Sun is the Great Agent of these changes in the lives of the people. He is the 'Eye of the World' (*Jagat-chakṣu*) and the 'Witness of Activities' (*Karma-Sākṣī*) of all beings. He causes day and night on earth, but Himself remains ever luminous, unaffected by them, and shines equally on all without distinction---the rich and the poor, the saint and the sinner, the learned and the ignorant, and the living and the non-living. Man's physical life on earth is regulated by the apparent movements (positions) of the Sun in relation to the earth. Thus, He reminds man of the Spiritual Sun, who shines within all as Consciousness (*Chaitanya*) and regulates their inner life as the *Antaryāmin* (Inner-Controller). He is the Inner-Witness (*Antahsākṣī*) of all the thoughts and actions of man, and of the three states of his cons-

ciousness—waking (*Jāgrat*), dream (*Svapna*), and deep-sleep (*Suṣupti*)—, and yet remaining ever transcendent, unaffected by all these.⁸

The Sun above, the Giver of Life (*Pūṣan*) and Light (*Tejas*), (Cf. footnote No. 4), is the great visible symbol of the Infinite Spiritual Sun, the source of all consciousness, the substratum of the entire cosmic universe, and the Inner-Self (*Antar-Ātman*) of all entities and beings in all the worlds of the cosmic universe. Man is a part and parcel of this cosmic universe, and within the 'Supreme Space' (*Parame-Vyoman*) or 'Sky of his psychic Heart' (*Hṛidaya-Ākāśaḥ*) (Cf. *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, II, i. 1 and I, vi. 1) also is indwelling that Spiritual Sun reflected in the lake of his mind as the *Jīva* or Soul, the centre of individual consciousness. The Sandhyā-Upāsanā, with the visible sun in the sky as the symbol, is a *Sādhana* (spiritual practice) to bring about the conjunction (*Sandhi*) of the individual Self with the Cosmic Self to realize the unity of both. (See footnote No. 4) Sandhyā, therefore is a form of Yoga-Sādhana for the union of the individual with the Supreme Reality, and the Sandhyā-ritual incorporates the elements or features of all the four main types of Yoga—*Karma*, *Bhakti*, *Dhyāna*, and *Jñāna*.

Our physical sciences deal only with the natural or physical (*Ādhi-bhautika*) aspect of Reality, cognized through the senses. But, according to Yāska's (Vedic etymologist and commentator, earlier than 7th century

B.C.) work, *Nirukti*, the Vedic Mantra-s and events described therein are to be interpreted, depending on the context and purpose, in any of the three ways: (1) *Ādhi-Bhautika* (natural or physical); (2) *Ādhi-Daivika* (mythico-theological—i.e. in relation to the Divinities or Divine Forces presiding over or controlling cosmic functions); and (3) *Ādhi-Ātmika*, or *Ādhyātmika* (spiritual—i.e. in relation to oneself and the Spiritual Principle within). For instance, man is treated by Medical Science as a living body; by Psychology as mind-cum-body; and by Religion and Mysticism as a *Soul or Spirit* in the body. Hence, a performer of the Sandhyā, in using the Vedic Mantra-s has to gradually advance from the sensual physical conceptions to the mental and theological ones, and, finally, to the intuitive spiritual conceptions, which reveal themselves to him when his mind becomes refined, pure, and serene and is filled with Faith (*Śraddhā*), Conviction (*Viśvāsa*), and Earnestness (*Niṣṭhā*). This principle is applicable to all the other forms of Upāsanā and Japa as well.

We use many artificial physical instruments and devices for our scientific investigation of the external world and for our secular development. Similarly, several effective artificial psycho-physical instruments in the form of rituals, Japa, meditation, etc. are needed for our investigation of the internal world and spiritual development. All evolved religions prescribe the necessary means, which include rituals, for spiritual development and God-vision or Self-realization. Swami Vivekananda characterized religion as 'the manifestation of the divinity already in man'. Āchārya Śaṅkara has stated: "*Śāstra-āchārya-upadeśa śama-damādibhiḥ susamskṛtem manaḥ ātma-darśhane karaṇam.*" (The mind which has been well disciplined and refined by the instructions of the Śāstra-s and the Āchārya as well as by the six spirituo-ethical disciplines such as *Śama*, *Dama*

8. Cf. *Svetāśvatara Upaniṣad* (VI, 11): "The One Effulgent Divinity is hidden in all beings. He is all-pervading, and is the Inner Self of all creatures. He presides over all actions, and all beings reside in Him. He is the Inner-Witness (*Sākṣī*). He endows all with consciousness (*Cheta*), and He is the Absolute (*Kevalaḥ*), free from the three *Guṇa*-s or phenomenal characteristics of Nature (*Nir-guṇa*)."

(control of the mind and the senses), etc.⁹ is the instrument for the perception of the Ātman).

In the Sandhyā-Upāsana, the entire personality—body, mind, soul and Spirit—is involved, and we proceed gradually from the external to the internal. Though Sandhyā is in the form of a ritual, it is not a *Kāmya-karma*, i.e. an optional ritual to be performed occasionally by one who wishes to attain some worldly desire (*Kāma*). It is a *Nitya-karma*, i.e. an obligatory daily ritual to be performed to purify oneself of all egoistic tendencies and keep the mind attuned to the Cosmic Reality. One must live one's life in the context of the universe. In worldly life, we strive to acquire by our varied activities external wealth and fulfilment of desires (*Artha* and *Kāma*). But in spiritual life, the effort is to acquire the internal wealth of Spiritual Freedom (*Mukti* or *Mokṣa*) and Absolute Bliss (*Ānanda*) by transforming the ego-centred personality into the Divine-centred one through ethical virtues (*Dharma*) such as non-violence (*Ahimsā*), truthfulness (*Satya*), love (*Prema*) of all beings, and unselfish service unto them (*Sevā*).

Swami Vivekananda defined the nature and goal of religion in these very profound and significant words:

“Each soul is potentially Divine. The Goal is to manifest this divinity within by controlling nature, external and internal. Do this either by work, or worship, or psychic control, or philosophy—by one or

9. The others are: *Titikṣā* (Forbearance), *Uparati* (Withdrawal from sense enjoyment), *Śraddhā* (Earnest Faith), and *Samādhana* (Concentration of the mind constantly on the object of meditation—Ātman-Brahman). Cf. *Vivekachūḍāmani* of Acharya Shankara for the definition of the six ethical disciplines and the *Sādhana-Chatuṣṭaya* (Four qualifications of an Aspirant)/indispensable to succeed in realizing the Self (Ātman/Brahman).

more or all of these—and BE FREE (MUKTA). This is the whole of religion. Doctrines or dogmas or rituals or books or temples or forms are but secondary details.” (See *The Complete Works*, Vol I. page 257).

In the elaboration of the Sandhyā-ritual this main purpose of spiritual elevation and the visualization of the union of the individual and the Universal is always kept in view, which is the aim of the Gāyatrī-Mantra. In the beginning, the mind is more impressed by concrete rituals than abstract thought. Hence ritualistic procedures are devised for the removal of the physical, mental and psychical obstacles within to enable one to rise mentally step by step above the ego-centred life to the divine consciousness. Each part of the ritual is meant to give expression externally to an internal mental attitude and spiritual feeling or mood (*Bhāva*). The main item in the *Sandhyā-Upāsana*, of course, is the repetition (*Japa*) of the Gāyatrī-Mantra and meditation or contemplation on it, the other aspects coming in only as auxiliaries. Sri Ramakrishna used to say that the “Sandhyā merges in the Gāyatrī, and the Gāyatrī in OM.”

6. Gāyatrī-Upāsana

First the Divine Gāyatrī is invoked as the source of the Vedas and then the different Worlds and the Supreme Divinity are located in the various limbs of one's body by touching them while uttering the Gāyatrī-Mantra, along with the *Vyāhṛti*-s (*Bhūh*, *Bhuvah*, *Svah*). This process of locating the Cosmic entities in one's limbs to evoke Universal feelings, since man is a Cosmic Microcosm built on the same plan as the Macrocosm, is known as *Aṅga-Nyāsa*. This is followed by the Japa and Meditation of the Gāyatrī-Mantra for as long as one can do conveniently, fixing however, a fairly

decent minimum number of times for the Japa. For Meditation, Gāyatrī is conceived in the form of a luminous Goddess illuminating the Heart and removing all darkness of Ignorance.¹⁰

OM ŚĀNTIḤ, ŚĀNTIḤ, ŚĀNTIḤ

[I adore the Goddess Gāyatrī, the

10. The following verse is repeated in adoration as a *Dhyāna-Śloka* (Invocatory Meditational Verse):

Muktā-vidrūma-hema-nīla-dhavalā-cchāyāih
Mukhāih-tryakṣaṇāih
Yuktām indu-nibaddha-ratnamukutām
tattvārtha varṇātmikām
Gāyatrīm varadabhayankusa-kasam
subhram-kapālam gadām
śankham-cakram-athārvinda-yugalam
hastāih-vahanīm bhaje

embodiment of the Varna-s (letters of the alphabet, or here OM) signifying the Supreme Truth, with Her five benign faces reflecting the hues of pearls, corals, gold, sapphire, and snow—each face studded with three eyes (denoting omniscience), whose head is adorned with a jewelled crown crested with the crescent-moon, whose two hands (out of ten, representing omnipotence) are in the pose of bestowing boons and fearlessness; and who in Her other hands holds the goad, the whip, the white-skull, the mace, the conch, and the disc (as symbols of the three functions of creation, protection, and destruction of the universe), and a pair of lotuses (as symbols of purity, love, devotion, and detachment).] Cf. also *Devī-Māhātmyam* or *Caṇḍī*: I. 73-74; IV. 10).

EMERSON'S 'BRAHMA'.....

(Continued from page 169)

The fourth and concluding stanza is once again inspired by the *Upaniṣads* and the *Bhagavad Gītā*. The 'strong gods' are perhaps *Indra* (the king of the gods), *Agni* (the god of fire), *Yama* (the god of death), *Varuṇa* (the god of the seas), *Kubera* (the god of wealth). The 'sacred seven' refers to the seven *ṛṣis*: *Kratu*, *Pulaha*, *Pulastya*, *Atri*, *Angira*, *Vasiṣṭha* and *Marīchi*. These *ṛṣis* preside over the *manvantaras* or epochs of time. The last two lines emphasize the Upaniṣadic dismissal of rituals and sacrifices whose aims were the attainment of heaven. One who is bent upon realizing the Brahman could not stop at the promises of heaven. Heaven is not a permanent abode of peace. After the exhaustion of one's own *karma-phala* (fruits of labour), one is thrown from heaven. According to the *Gītā*: "Having enjoyed the vast world of heaven, they return to the world of mortals on the exhaustion

of their merits; thus abiding by the injunctions of the three *Vedas*, desiring objects of desires they go and come."²⁸ Emerson puts this idea forcefully in the last line of the poem: "Find me, and turn thy back on heaven."

A true spiritual seeker always turns his back on the so-called heaven. Both the *Upaniṣads* and the *Bhagavad Gītā* have avowedly declared the uselessness of action as a means to liberation and have emphasized knowledge as the only means for attaining *mokṣa* or salvation. Emerson subscribes to such a view in his last two lines. Besides 'Brahma', the other poems which are profoundly influenced by Hindu concepts are 'Hamatreya', 'Wood-Notes', 'The Celestial Love', 'Sphinx' and 'Spirit'.

²⁸. *Ibid.*, IX. 21.

God in Man

S. K. KAR

Man in the cycle of his evolution discovers Truth, Beauty and Goodness spring from one common fount—God. This brings the realization that He is the Ground and Goal of life—writes Sri S. K. Kar. The author is Deputy Accountant General (Fund.), Calcutta.

Man today claims himself the highest, the final and best triumph of biological evolution. He has come to this point after passing through many stages.

In pre-evolution, man was identified with primordial Nature, the unmanifested Seed which was essentially Uncreate, but Potential. It is for this that Matter is regarded as *Prakṛti*, the Mother, from which the whole universe was produced.

A second evolutionary stage saw the manifestation of life, or *Prāṇa*. Commensurate with the existence of abundant carbon, hydrogen and oxygen on the surface of the earth at a certain primeval time, there was suitable condition for the appearance of life and vital organisms. This evolution of life was not due to matter alone, but matter infused and grounded in God or Spirit.

In a third stage there was mental and intellectual development, quite distinct from mere existence as a vital organism. A higher plane of organic regulation and co-ordination was born. The fourth period witnessed the possession by man of a more developed mind. Intelligent will and reflective self-consciousness came into being. This, bearing the vestigial marks of his origins on his complex organism and fragile body, limited life, and bounded mind, the human being evolved into full powers.

Today he has come to dominate nature throughout, and is master of the world. While his physical frame is more powerful, his movement quicker and his instincts and intuition sharper than those of other animals, it is man's intelligence which enables him to adapt and adjust to all new and varying situations. Above all man is capable of realizing the Spirit within, which can neither be defined nor understood by objective thinking. It is something which cannot be seen, but can be felt. What can be said about the Spirit is that it is not the physical body, the vital organism, the mind or will, but something that underlies them all and sustains them. It is the basis and existential ground of human being. Thus, it cannot be said that man is simply the animal gone up, or that the animal is man gone down. There is a deep mystery and a gulf between the two, not to be explained by any amount of scientific observation and intellectualizing, but which can only be sensed in the heart as something extraordinary. The greatest observable difference between the man and animal, however, is that man is rational. His rationality distinguishes him from the animals. He eats to live, but does not live to eat.

The purpose of his life is something more and greater. He has got his brain to think, heart to feel and conscience to will. In other words, his developed mind consists of thinking, feeling and willing—all for the sake of

discovering Truth. He *thinks to search for truth, feels in search of beauty, and wills for goodness and morality*. These being inseparable and interdependent, however, one cannot stand without the others. Man's search for truth is demonstrated by his development of science and philosophy; for beauty, by the existence of art and literature, and goodness, by his unselfish work for the benefit of others with an ethical and moral sensitivity. It is this ethical sense which enables man to think. 'Work is Worship'.

While striving to comprehend the law that sustains the universe, man uses his intellect-reasoning. The root of all thinking does not, however, lie in mere reasoning, but in life itself. The highest range of mental life is an intuitive life and the great scientific discoveries have been possible not merely due to laborious processes of intellect, but due to the intuitive understanding of creative minds. What labour of intellect gives us is mere precise measurements and detailed demonstration of theoretical data about natural phenomena. It is the inventive genius of the creative thinkers which has been at the root of the great discoveries that have made modern science so wonderful. A scientist occupied with intense and unwavering interest in a problem, with the help of intuition, suddenly becomes aware of a new perspective, application, or even a new truth, hitherto unseen or unheard of. Of course, these new findings are not miracles but depend on the scientist's previous training and carefully cultivated knowledge. While the spark of genius lights the fire, intellect supplies the necessary tools.

What has been discussed here is applicable not only to physical sciences, but also to metaphysics, or philosophy, which is an insight into Reality. A philosopher, in search for internal and subtle truths which cannot be revealed by physical experiments, keeps

his mind undisturbed by the senses and dry intellect. Unless he develops an intuitive side and goes beyond the strong hold of logic he cannot grasp truth or reality. Philosophy should not be merely intellectual discipline dealing with highly abstract concepts beyond or without relevance in life. On the other hand, it aims at finding out truth which is ever relevant to life's struggle and purpose.

Man yearns to reveal the beauty that is veiled in nature. He attempts this through art as well as science. The artist experiences the deeper reality of things and tries to give an expression to it. An aesthetic appreciation is not possible by logical understanding or analysis. A higher insight is required to truly see it and truly express it. To the artist, the visible world is not only composed of outer appearances, but includes something more. He discovers something of the Spirit behind, which underlies the veneer of things. What he discovers is the very heart of the object itself. It is in this sense that an artistic truth is a discovery and not a creation. It is a discovery of the inner beauty that cannot be measured, but can only be felt by the heart and understood by intuitive insight.

The cognition, the aesthetic and ethical sides of human life, already discussed, are no doubt vital and significant. Despite this, they are only facets and not the whole. It is the religious who includes them all. The essence of religious striving is a holistic realization. Truth, Beauty or Goodness in isolation cannot bring about religious insight. While combined, they are not the mere sum total of their parts, but something greater. The religious man with a combination of these three—Truth, Beauty and Goodness, finds his mind filled with light, his heart filled with bliss and his soul filled with love. It is at this final stage that man becomes con-

cious of the Spirit in him. He realizes that Spirit in the Supreme Light. He becomes a genius with his intellect inspired by this light, and becomes an embodiment of love with the Light permeating his heart.

At this stage the son of man becomes the son of God, as he has become capable of tracing the value of truth, goodness and beauty to a common background—God, seen as light, love and life. He realizes that God is the Ground, Guide and Goal of human life. God is the ground of creation, guide of operation and goal of perfection. Man feels that the object of his life is not a mere unity of truth, beauty and goodness, but God, who not only includes these, but transcends them. As he becomes spiritual, he exemplifies a new quality of life. He realizes that it is the One Spirit which is present in all minds, lives and bodies. He becomes a superman, the master of his life. He not only realizes what the Spirit is, but also enters into conscious possession and acts according to his supreme realization.

To have the knowledge of God it is necessary to hear His voice in the depths of one's heart. Only the Seers can give us the power, with the help of which we can know, love and appreciate the world in a new and meaningful way. It is through the aid of the Seers that we acquire awareness of the true meaning of life. The reality of the spiritual world can be realized by means of our acquaintance with the saints. The truth is revealed through their lives and hence cannot be refuted by words. As they speak of what has not only been experienced by themselves, but by others before them, they compel our reverence.

As God is the Ground, Guide and Goal of our life, He is always working in our hearts to draw us towards Him. While the redemptive function of God is an incessant

activity, it becomes more manifest when the moral order is disturbed and new adjustments are required to be brought about. God incarnates Himself in a human form, which may be called His highest temple. This is a special revelation, called the Avatar in Hindu mythology and philosophy.

The attempt in modern times to explain everything scientifically has undermined credibility of the subtle truths of religion. While seventeenth century men of science thought of the world as a great machine and imagined that the mechanism was contrived by God and worked according to laws also created by Him, eighteenth century scientists refused to include God in their explanations of the universe.

India felt the waves of these intellectual movements in Western thought. Perhaps due to her vulnerable weakness having been sapped of strength by colonization and misrule, Occidental achievements held great sway for some time. Though a land of hoary traditions, India felt the influx of atheistic and materialistic ideas from the West. Occidental achievements held a sparkling glamour which lured the Indian mind.

By the middle of the nineteenth century India's instinct for self-preservation was awakened, however, and some social and religious movements were born to react. The efforts and idealism of the new leaders, however, could not seem to capture the imagination of the conservative elements. What became evident therefore was that a complete renaissance of Hinduism would be needed if India's culture was to survive. There was need for a superman to be born whose spiritual personality could focus the attention of Self-forgetting Indians on the fact that their own culture and religion not only could compete in the modern world, but also had vitality enough to contribute greatly to the

rest of the world. The call of the age was fulfilled with the fortunate and auspicious birth of Sri Ramakrishna in a poor, but orthodox Brahmin family of Bengal. He came down to earth to show man how to realize God.

Sri Ramakrishna practised intense religious austerities for twelve long years, and having the vision of God before him established once again, and taught the validity of all religions as legitimate paths to Truth. Most truly it can be said of him that he was the Great Harmonizer of conflicting faiths and opinions, for he practised all religious faiths and realized all religious truths in the course of his *sādhana*. Devoting his whole life to religious practices, he waited anxiously for someone who could carry his message to the world, specially to the West. He was in search of someone who represented the spirit of the modern age—unwilling to accept even the highest truth of religion without verification, as with the spirit of modern scientists.

Seemingly pre-arranged by divine plan, Sri Ramakrishna's coming down to the earth was followed by the descent of one of the Seven Sages. Narendranath, later to be known worldwide as Swami Vivekananda, was, before his birth one of the *Saptarshi*, seated in the transcendental realm, lost in profound and eternal meditation, surpassing even the gods in knowledge and purity. When, as a college student, Narendra came into contact with Sri Ramakrishna he seemed to embody all the doubts and skeptical spirit of the modern world, shaken as it was by scientism and materialism. But one of Narendra's outstanding qualities was a burning zeal for the truth. Ultimately, by the magic touch and association of Sri Ramakrishna, little by little Naren was led from doubt to beatitude, from the darkness and anguish of the skeptical mind to certainty

and bliss, from the seething vortex of the world to the grand expanse of universal oneness.¹ He could gradually realize that it is God alone who has manifested Himself as the world and created beings. This realization prompted him to direct all his future activities to the service of man and he determined to proclaim this grand truth before the world at large. After the passing away of Sri Ramakrishna, Naren, subsequently known as Swami Vivekananda, actually translated the ideas of the Great Master into action. He made the *Ideal of Service* one of the fundamental principles of the new brotherhood of monks known as the Ramakrishna Order, its motto being, 'For self-liberation, and for the well-being of humanity at large'.

While carrying the message of Sri Ramakrishna to the world, Swamiji exposed the old myth that religious truth has a lesser validity than scientific truth. According to Vivekananda, religion grasps the truths of metaphysical reality, just as chemistry and other sciences deal with the truths of matter in the physical world. The difference is that while scientists read the book of outside nature, the sages read what man is within—the inner nature and essence of the Self. The sages of religion have all come to agreement about the oneness of existence. Religion is based on analysis of the human nature and soul. The teachings of Swamiji are, that man, while he possesses a lower nature that obeys nature's laws and is subject to scientific analysis, also has an inner higher nature which is pristine and divine and which can be known and manifested with more and more purity. "Religion is this realization," he said; "It is not mere hearing or acknowledging, but being and becoming—the whole soul becoming changed into what it

1. *Life of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1981) Vol. I, p. 80.

believes.”² His teachings were clear that nature exists for the education of the soul, that the whole world of religions is only a travelling, a coming up of different men and women, through various conditions and circumstances, to the same goal. Religion has existed all through eternity and will ever exist, expressing itself in various countries in various ways. It is evolving a God out of material man. The best way to aid in the development, Swamiji said, is to worship God by serving man. Ultimate Truth, the divine ground of man and the universe is One; God is the inspirer of all.³

The spirit of universality and broadmindedness in the teachings of Swami Vivekananda on religion, coupled with the depth of his Advaitic vision, has captured the imagination of all.

He once said on the subject of ‘a universal

2. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989) Vol. II, p. 396.

3. *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 18.

religion’: “If there is ever to be a universal religion, it must be one which will be infinite like the God it will preach, and whose sun will shine upon the followers of Krishna and of Christ...and Mohammed alike, and will...embrace in its infinite arms...every human being, from the lowest grovelling savage to the highest man, towering by the virtues of his head and heart almost above humanity. It will be a religion which will have no place for persecution or intolerance ...and will recognize divinity in every man and woman...whose whole scope, whose whole force, will be centred in aiding humanity to realize its own true, divine nature.”⁴

The result of the contact of Sri Ramakrishna and Narendranath, was the Swami Vivekananda, who became the heart of a New India, with her ancient spiritual perspective “heightened, widened and strengthened to include modern learning; old ideas assimilating the new, the intense activity of the West to be combined with the deep meditation of the East.”

4. *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 19.

The mind is purified by good and noble thoughts, holy company and good deeds. Then only does it become quiet and become one-pointed in Japa and meditation. As the reflection in a dirty mirror is not clear, so, if the mind is impure, it is not able to grasp divine thoughts and ideas. For this reason, spiritual practices and prayers are essentially necessary. In the beginning one has to force oneself to do these, even if the mind be disinclined for them. As you go on practising, you will find that you are developing a taste for them, and you will like them. If the patient does not want to take medicine, he has to be persuaded or forced to take it. But there are such patients also who spit out the medicine, even when it is put into their mouths. Then how can their disease be cured?

—Swami Virajananda (*Towards the Goal Supreme*)

Swami Vivekananda and National Integration

DR. A. R. MAHAPATRA

A new impulse towards national integration is the only remedy for the many crises that have been plaguing the nation in recent times. India can come out of the seeming impasse if she only heeds the thundering message of Vivekananda. Dr. A. R. Mahapatra, D. Litt., in his essay discusses the practical steps suggested by Swamiji. The author served as Reader in the Department of Philosophy, D.A.V. College, Koraput, Orissa, and has written a number of books in Oriya and English.

National integration is basically a concept of national unity. Practically speaking, national integration means the active co-operation and constructive contribution of the people towards the national unity, integrity and development. To Swami Vivekananda, the sense of national integration is "a unity in variety and individuality in universality"—most valuable for development of the society. He also said that there is oneness behind all creation, only we should be conscious of it.¹

National integration is not a perfect assimilation. No society is ever perfectly integrated, but some amount of integration is a requisite for the very existence of a nation, and this it experiences all through its life span. The integration of the country does not entail the loss of social identity by any of its cultural sub-groups.

Swami Vivekananda had a profound conception of integration. For him all came through love of God and humanity. The love of his country was part of his love for humanity, and love for humanity was part of his love for God. He who truly loves God loves humanity as a whole and also

loves his country. Though we see divisions, in actuality, according to Swamiji, India's many peoples and cultures are already integrated and unified on a very sublime level. Only our duty is to re-discover and to acknowledge it in our thoughts and actions and make it viable in our day to day life.

Since national integration is in essence spiritual it is therefore free from all narrow ideas of regionalism, provincialism, casteism, inordinate attachment to a particular language or other forms of fanaticism. Swami Vivekananda loved all the people and desired their happiness and welfare in all the parts of India, irrespective of caste or creed. He looked upon all Indians as his brothers and sisters, without considering whether they were Bengalis or Punjabis, Maharashtrians or Tamilians, or Oriyas or Biharis.

In our country people of various language groups, religions and sub-cultures are living together. But according to Swami Vivekananda, "...to the Indian mind there is nothing higher than religious ideals. The Indian mind is first religious, then anything else."² Yet, the religion which Swamiji preached is universal in its spirit, comprehensive in its scope and practical and concrete in its application. Religion alone can secure

1. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989) Vol. VI, p. 114.

2. *Ibid.*, Vol. III, pp. 287-88.

deeper integration for a nation like India. The religion of universality and spiritual brotherhood, including men of all faiths, affirms the unity of existence, the fundamental oneness of reality (*Aital ātmayam idam sarvam*). It also asserts the divinity of man in his essence. Things are one in their essence, though they appear as many in their manifestations.

Religion is universal. All religions try to define one and the same indefinable Reality. Swamiji affirms that religions are all alike in that their ultimate purpose is the same. Sri Ramakrishna, Guru of Swami Vivekananda, practised the precepts of the different faiths and saw that all are pathways to God. In his spiritual realization he disclosed that ultimate Truth and the God of different religions is One. The spiritual quest is Godward and the same for all.

As a patriot nationalist, Swamiji loved India very much and he believed that it has a message for the world and can give spiritual help to the world. He was proud of India's spirituality. His call to the nation is highly remarkable, wherein he declared: "Thou brave one, be bold, take courage, be proud that thou art an Indian, and proudly proclaim, 'I am an Indian, every Indian is my brother.' The ignorant Indian, the poor and destitute Indian, the Brahmin Indian, the Pariah Indian, is my brother. The Indian is my life, Indian gods and goddesses are my God. India's society is the cradle of my infancy, the pleasure-garden of my youth, the sacred heaven, the Varanasi of my old age. The soil of India is my highest heaven, the good of India is my good."³

Swamiji awakened the slumbering nation with the lion-roar, "Arise, Awake, and stop not till the goal is reached!" The Vedanta,

the Upaniṣads, exhort us to overcome sloth, idleness, inertia, weakness and faintheartedness. We need strength. Real strength is the spiritual power of the Self. Swamiji said. "...no negativism, all positive, affirmative. I am, God is, everything is in me. I will manifest health, purity, knowledge, whatever I want!" He also advised emphatically to have faith in ourselves—"all power is in you, be conscious and bring it out...Say, I can do everything. Even the poison of a snake is powerless if you can firmly deny it. Beware! No saying 'nay', no negative thoughts! Say, Yea, Yea, *So'ham*—'I am He! I am He!'"⁴

Swami Vivekananda's conception of India's nationhood and national vitality is very comprehensive. For him nationalism did not mean merely love of our motherland stretching from the Himalayas to Kanyakumari, but also means that we should love our religion and culture, our spiritual heritage and scriptures, and should feel proud of them. It also means that we should have love and reverence for all the great men and women in our history and revere their memory. At the same time we should love the poor, the downtrodden, the helpless and miserable who are with us.

A fully integrated society is not practically possible in India unless the condition of poor and miserable people is improved. Swamiji always held that their uplift is the basic pre-condition for building up the great India of the future that he in his fervent patriotism visualized. He said that no amount of politics would be of any avail until the masses in India are once more well educated, well fed, and well cared for.⁵

Indians in general are fond of calling Swami Vivekananda a 'patriot-saint'. What

3. *Ibid.*, Vol. IV, p. 480.

4. *Ibid.*, Vol. VI, pp. 274-76.

5. *Ibid.*, Vol. V, pp. 222-23.

is usually implied is that Swamiji combined in himself the fiery national spirit of a patriot and the spirituality of a saint. Though Swamiji himself was never directly involved in Indian politics, his utterances about India's great future kindled a fierce national spirit in the hearts of the youth and workers in society seeking to bring about change.

They believed that if India awoke to the realization of its deep cultural unity, to the call of integrity, sacrifice, strength and selflessness, political freedom was sure to come. This is what Swamiji accomplished by his electrifying message to the Indians. His object was to produce men in the true sense of the term so they would not only achieve freedom for the country, but would be able to preserve it. That is why Swamiji emphasized 'man-making religion' and man-making in education.

Swami Vivekananda advocated the practical Vedanta. The Vedanta holds not only that all men are one in spiritual brotherhood, but that the last word in religion is man's realization of his essential oneness with the entire universe. The central teaching of the Vedanta--the Upaniṣads--is how to realize this oneness. In the sense of spiritual oneness alone comes love and fearlessness; separation leads us to hatred and fear.⁶ Swamiji also taught that "...oneness is the secret of everything and everywhere we are one."⁷ He wanted a twofold application of Vedanta in our practical day to day life--one, for awakening man's faith in himself and his own strength, and two, selfless work in the spirit of serving all men in the spirit of serving God. Swamiji says, "Look upon every man, woman and everyone as God. You cannot help anyone. You can only serve; serve the children of the Lord, serve the

Lord Himself if you have the privilege. You may invent an image through which to worship God, but a better image already exists, the living man. You may build a temple in which to worship God and that may be good; but a better one, a much higher one already exists, the human body. Man is the highest being that exists and this is the greatest world. We can have no conception of God higher than man, so our God is man, and man is God."⁸

The writings and lectures of Swami Vivekananda have contributed a great deal to the strengthening of the moral foundations of Indian nationalism in theory and in practice. At a time when India was seized with apathy, inertia and despair, Swamiji thundered the gospel of patriotism and urged people to be strong and united. Unity and strength were the political testaments of Vivekananda to the Indian nation. He had tremendous love for the nation and was a patriot of patriots. He went further than all others.

Urging all Indians to do away even with narrow nationalism, he reminded them of the need to place and judge all problems with an international perspective. He exhorted Indians to work for education and uplift of the masses, and national integration so that India could take her leading role in the community of nations. His call to the people was to be strong and help others, be strong, and to have faith in their own goodness. Three things, he used to say, are necessary for making an individual or a nation great: (1) Conviction of the power of goodness, (2) Absence of jealousy, and (3) Being and doing good oneself and helping others who are trying to be and to do good. Thus he showed us the way to build the nation on a sound and rational foundation. For Indians religion will be the greatest

6. *Ibid.*, Vol. VIII, p. 24, 129.

7. *Ibid.*, pp. 299, 466.

8. *Ibid.*, Vol. VII, p. 30.

help, and everything should be done through religion.

According to Vivekananda, understanding and cherishing, practising and teaching the values of our religion and culture is the greatest act of patriotism. Expansion is life, he used to say, and inertia, contraction and selfishness is death. Religion and culture lies at the very soul of India and is in the life blood of the nation. Therefore, the highest act of patriotism and the greatest good we can do to ourselves is to cling fast to the universal principles of true religion, practise them and propagate them. Always Swamiji reminded us that our religion is the most rational and scientific one and recognizes the divinity in every man, the unity and oneness of God, and the harmony of all religions.

Today India needs more practical integration and a greater faith in our spiritual unity because in the different states like Punjab, Jammu and Kashmir, and Assam is being created destabilizing communalism, separatism, and these are challenging our national unity. A new approach is badly needed to solve the problems presented by these divisive forces. Returning again to Vivekananda for advice would be the wise policy as the great problem is one of harmonizing. In this he was the great Teacher,—how to harmonize and unify without destroying the individuality and true aspirations of any of the various elements.

Swami Vivekananda suggested four working principles as both ends and means to a

better future, viz. to throw off the struggle between religious ideologies and emphasize our basic agreement ; to establish our unified foundations of unity ; and deepen every individual's love and desire to serve the country through following the path of renunciation and intense activity. To some of his disciples Swamiji wrote, "Let India be your God."

Some great men were highly influenced by Swami Vivekananda. Mahatma Gandhi said, "I have gone through his works very thoroughly and after having gone through them, the love that I had for my country became a thousand-fold."⁹ Tagore said, "If you want to know India, study Vivekananda. In him everything is positive and nothing negative."¹⁰ Subhas Chandra Bose wrote, "He laid the greatest stress on character building. If he had been alive, I would have been at his feet."¹¹ Jawaharlal Nehru said, "He was, I think, one of the great founders of the national modern movement of India...I pay my homage to this great son of India who was instrumental in putting a new life in our people. His writings are as fresh and as valuable today as when they were written. I am sure that they will continue to inspire not only the present, but coming generations."¹²

9. *Prabuddha Bharata*, May 1963 ; p. 170.

10. *World Thinkers on Ramakrishna-Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture) p. 34.

11. *Prabuddha Bharata*, July 1932, p. 352.

12. *A Bridge to Eternity*, p. 211 ; and *Prabuddha Bharata*, Feb. 1963, p. 46.

Action and Contemplation

DR. CYRUS R. MEHTA

Dr. Cyrus R. Mehta, Associate Professor of Biostatistics at Harvard University School of Public Health, U.S.A., in this interesting short paper, writes that meditation leads to proper actions and greater efficiency. But the converse is also true—that work done with unselfish motives also helps meditation.

One of the great themes pervading the *Bhagavad Gita* is the apparent conflict between the "Secular and the Sacred", or, "Action versus Contemplation". We tend to keep our outer and inner lives in separate compartments. The outer is the worldly life of being a Provider, a Mother, a Husband, a Professor, or a Socialite. The inner is the life of introspection, of asking why we behave the way we do, what is right, what is wrong, how can we be better people, and sometimes even more fundamental questions like, who are we, why are we here, is there a God, is there an after-life, and so on. We lose our peace of mind when our inner and outer lives are not in harmony with one another.

For Arjuna, the great hero of the Mahabharata battle, which is the setting for the *Bhagavad Gita*, the dilemma was particularly excruciating. He and his brothers had been wrongfully deprived of their kingdom. He was a warrior by profession, and in this capacity, his secular duty lay in fighting a battle against injustice, for the good of his people. Many depended on him for protection. Many had committed themselves to fighting on his side. It was rather late in the day to have second thoughts. Action, in his case meant that he pick up his weapons and fight. And yet, at this crucial hour, the contemplative side of his nature began to assert itself. The dilemma he faced was the nature of the enemy. For, arrayed against him in the opposite camp were his relatives, his beloved teacher, and even his own grand-

father. "Was it right", he began asking himself, "to resort to violence against his own kinsmen?" Would it not be better to forgo the battle, concede his kingdom to the enemy, and retire into the forest for a life of contemplation? Should he risk losing his soul, for the sake of gaining a kingdom? Would he enjoy a kingdom, gained at the expense of slaying his cousins and grandfather?

Through Arjuna's dilemma, the *Bhagavad Gita* forces us to face an important question. Are our worldly responsibilities inevitably in conflict with our spiritual goals? Are the secular and the sacred at odds with one another in some fundamental way? Is our choice bound to be either Action or Contemplation? If we choose a life of Contemplation, are we abrogating our responsibilities? If we choose a life of Action, are we gaining the world at the cost of losing our soul? On the surface it certainly seems to be that way. Active people are busy being successful in their professions; in their pursuit of science, or law or medicine, or parenting. They rarely express the need for a contemplative life though they may possibly feel an inner urge for it. On the other hand the contemplatives are prone to discount worldly life as a nuisance and a distraction. "The world is temporary," they say, "it will end in death. Let us look within and find that which is permanent. Why should we waste our time on mundane temporary things like family life, professional life, or the pursuit of science. God is within us. Let us look

for him there." And so, any form of worldly enjoyment is rejected, in favour of a difficult inner quest at which few succeed.

But the *Gita* advocates a middle path that reconciles these two extremes. It states in effect that action and contemplation go together, each one sustaining the other. For it states in verse one of Chapter six:

"It is the man who performs his duties (Actions) without caring for their fruits (i.e., in an unselfish way) who deserves to be called a Sannyasin (contemplative), not he who merely keeps no fire" (i.e. who abandoning his responsibilities, attempts instead to lead an exclusively contemplative life).

In other words abandoning one's obligatory actions in hopes of utilizing one's time for a "higher" (contemplative) purpose is not an automatic qualification for becoming a contemplative. An active responsible person performing obligatory duties unselfishly may far more appropriately be considered a contemplative. Thus verse three of Chapter six of the *Gita* says:

"For one who desires to ascend the path leading to the heights of spiritual communion, detached work is the means. For one who has ascended it, quiescence (or serenity) is the means." In other words, we evolve to a higher state of inner consciousness through work done in a proper spirit. And having attained that higher state, we do not abandon the work at all. Far from it. Now we continue on as before, but are calm and serene in all our actions.

Is the *Gita's* assertion that Action and Contemplation go together, each sustaining the other, really true? The best evidence

is our own experience and reason. Contemplation does indeed aid Action. We do know from daily experience that a period of quiet meditation, alone in the morning say, concentrates the mind and helps us to function with greater efficiency, better judgement, and more alertness all through the day. But the key question is, what about the converse? Can we assert also that Action performed in the right spirit aids Contemplation? The *Gita* certainly asserts it. What is our own experience? Proper action keeps the conscience clear. It frees one from worries. And to a greater or lesser extent, it frees one from material wants. All these are crucial preliminaries to meditation. There can be no meditation if the mind is full of fear or brooding or worry about where the next loaf of bread will come from. Finally, there is one very important lesson that active work done in the right spirit teaches. This is the value of unselfishness. In any organization, the leader must forget his or her petty goals or wishes in favour of what is best for the whole organization. Working in a responsible position (be it as a parent in a family, or a classroom teacher, or an office supervisor) teaches one this great lesson. One learns to think of others, to put oneself in their shoes, to view the world from their standpoint. This is the greatest lesson that the Active life can give. It teaches us to forget the individual ego in favour of the collective ego. And this lesson carries over into the inner contemplative life. Petty thoughts, desires, the whims of the mind, and the ego, all these are obstacles to meditation. To the extent that experience with the outside world causes us to broaden out from the narrow individual ego to the broad all-encompassing group ego, Action has come to the aid of Contemplation.

The Twenty-four Gurus

A. VISWANATHAN

The Bhagavata stories, which are always a source of inspiration, are retold in an arresting way by Sri A. Viswanathan. The author is an engineer and at present the Dean of the Training Institute of Indian Railways in Secunderabad.

Sages tell us that Mother Nature is indeed the wisest of all God's creations, and fashions each creature with brilliant skill, precisely to suit its own individual circumstances. Mother Nature has much wisdom to offer us, if we study It closely.

The sacred text of the *Bhāgavata* carries many eternal lessons. In the eleventh Skandha, is the description of the twenty-four Gurus, all derived from Nature. These are—the Earth, the Air, the Sky, Water, Fire, the Moon, the Sun, the Dove, the Python, the Ocean, the Moth, the Honeybee, the Elephant, the Honey gatherer, the Deer, the Fish, the Courtesan, the Osprey, the Infant, the Maiden, the Forger of arrows, the Serpent, the Spider and the Wasp. Now let us consider the lesson conveyed by each Guru.

Mother Earth is verily the embodiment of patience and forgiveness. One may cut trenches and delve deep into the bowels of Earth, for robbing it of precious stones, minerals and so forth. But Mother Earth is uncomplaining and continues to provide sustenance to the very man who injures Her person for his own selfish ends. To a discerning devotee, Mother Earth is the emblem of patience, forgiveness and a sacrificing nature. In places, Mother Earth rises in the shape of mountains which serve to inspire man as symbols of maturity, stability and permanence, and which provide direct links with climates, and help to sustain life.

A breath of Air goes through various lands and various climes. Passing over offal

it picks up a dirty smell, but passing over a flower bed shortly thereafter, it replaces this dirty smell with pure fragrance. As far as Air is concerned, itself remains entirely unattached to the bad smell, or to the fragrance, both of which it picks up and discards readily. A devotee who is rooted firmly in God, remains totally unaffected by his circumstances from time to time. The only permanent condition is his firm attachment to God.

The Sky is everywhere and in every thing, but yet attached to nothing. It is deep, and is transparent. A Devotee need not withdraw from the world. He may be everywhere and in every thing and yet be attached to nothing. Like the sky, he should sustain deep faith in God by keeping transparent innocence.

Water is a noble creation of God that sustains life in all living creatures. It absorbs impurity from other things, and returns purity to them. It is everywhere, but exists separately. It is revered by all, but is attached to nothing. A true Devotee too should sanctify his surroundings. With selfless spirit of service he should absorb impurity and return purity. Though he may become an object of reverence to his fellow beings, he should not be attached to society.

Fire burns neither incense with enthusiasm, nor a corpse with reluctance. Sometimes hidden and sometimes manifest, it is an ever-shining example of *Tapasyā*. It performs with the same dedication all its duties both

pleasant and unpleasant. It purifies and sanctifies whatever comes into contact with it. A Devotee has this to learn from Fire.

Shining bright on a full moon day, the Moon gradually wanes until it vanishes on new moon day, and then it waxes back into its old glory and beauty on the next full moon night. The moon is always there. The wane and wax are only our own perceptions of the moon, and not the moon itself. Even so, a Devotee who has planted himself firmly in God, becomes immune to growth and decay, or to prosperity and calamity, which are merely outward perceptions.

As we are aware, the Sun is in many ways the Causator of various activities in this world. If the Sun does not rise, these activities come to a stop. But the Sun itself is not attached to any activity, nor derives benefit therefrom. It is merely a witness to the activity. Even so, the Devotee immersed in God knows his deep inner being to be a mere witness to what goes on all around, totally unattached to any action or fruit thereof.

Once upon a time, on a tree there lived happily a dove and its consort. In due time many precious offspring came forth to give them delight. A hunter saw them, knew his opportunity, and spread his net around the tree. One day, the offspring ventured out, and fell into the net. The hunter was delighted. The mother dove who by then had returned with morsels of food for her young ones, was riven with grief. Deciding that life without her offspring was not worth while, she also entered into the net of the hunter. Shortly thereafter the male dove also came along. Understanding the situation and stricken with grief, he too willingly courted death by dropping into the net of the hunter, to keep company in death with

his consort and offspring. A man surely courts death, who knows not the real aim of life, and immersing himself in domestic affairs, confuses domestic bliss for permanent happiness. The net spread around the tree of life is the net of death. The only way to escape it is to know it for its impermanence, the links with every day matters of the world.

The python remains stationary for days together. Making no effort, it waits patiently for long, knowing fully well that its due prey will certainly come its way. And when the prey comes, the python seizes it. After a meal the python remains satiated for days. If another prey comes its way, before due time, it does no harm. A true devotee will spend only limited energies in seeking daily sustenance, drawing from the world no more sustenance than he needs, and expending his energy in no pursuit but that of God.

The Ocean is deep, transparent and unbounded. Even so, a seeker of God should be deep in his intellect, transparent in his conduct and unbounded in his knowledge.

And then we have the Honeybee which indefatigably collects honey until its hive is full. Then, along comes the hunter who drives away the bees with a flaming torch, and proceeds to rob not only the carefully collected honey, but even destroys the hive itself and the young ones too. The same experience awaits a person who foolishly garners this world's wealth for himself and his offspring. The great Sankaracarya has said that man who worships wealth, has to be afraid of even his own son. Like in the case of the Honeybee, a person's accumulated wealth is often the very cause of his own death and destruction.

Irresistibly attracted, the Moth rushes foolishly towards the attractive flame. Even

before it knows, its wings are singed, and it falls to its death in the burning fire. Even so, a foolish person surely rushes to his destruction who feels irresistibly attracted towards unreal things like '*kāminī-kāñcana*'.

A wild elephant in the forest is foot-loose and fancy-free, and with no other creatures to dare challenge it. Its happiness is complete until the moment when it perceives a she-elephant, and rushes madly towards it. Losing all awareness of its own precious freedom, in this mad rush it falls into a cunningly prepared pit. For a moment's loss of self-control, it pays a heavy price, and loses its freedom forever. The person whose mind is planted in God has to be continuously alert against even a moment's lapse. Too often, there are many thorns concealed in plants along with a wealth of honey deep inside beautiful flowers. Frenzied by the fragrance, a Honeybee takes no note of such dangers, and in the mindless rush, gets impaled on the thorn. A person who loses all discretion in his pursuit of pleasure will suffer the same fate. It is considered that the Deer is fond of music, and when it hears good music it stands entranced. This is the exact instant of time when the hunter kills it. A fish, greedily rushing to grab the morsel at the end of the fish hook dangling in the water, is really rushing to its own destruction.

Once there was a courtesan ; waiting in vain for visitors, she spent an anxious night thinking of all the missed attention and rich presents from clients. Almost the whole night passed. Early in the morning the courtesan fell into introspection, and she realized that she had been hankering after illusory fruits of pleasure, when she could have spent her time immersed in the permanent and worthwhile thought of God. When this realization dawned on her, in the intensity of her remorse, she sat down and

entered into meditation of the Lord. In the short interval before sunrise she attained *Mokṣa*, spiritual liberation. The man whose heart is planted in God will know that absolute *Vairāgya* is the only desirable state, and that worldly disappointments are indeed the stepping stones for release from worldly bonds, into eternal salvation.

Once an Osprey picked up a nice bit of meat and flew up into the sky. Immediately it was surrounded by many other birds which tried to snatch away the meat. Continuously warding off these attacks on its precious possession, it became tired and finally dropped the morsel from its beak. At once all the birds rushed away to catch the dropping meat, and the Osprey began suddenly to experience a singular peace and happiness. If one holds on to something that is coveted by others, that is the surest pathway to danger, and to renounce it, the easiest way to peace and happiness.

An infant at play is innocent and happy, and without the burden of a thought it is secure in its mother's love. Even so, a devotee is happy and unburdened in mind, who surrenders himself to God and is secure in His Love.

Once some guests came, and as her parents were away, a young girl had to entertain them. After comfortably seating the visitors, she came away into another room to prepare food for them. As she was pounding some rice, a few bangles on her hand shook together and made much sound. Feeling shy that the guests might hear the sound of the bangles and know what she was doing, she took them off from her hand, one after the other. As she took off each bangle, the sound became less and less. When only one bangle was left, there was no sound at all. Even so, a devotee should know that solitude is essential for attaining concentration and

meditation of God. A company of two is noise and distractive ; a company of more than two often leads to quarrels.

Once an Ironmonger was told by the King to make fifty arrows on a particular day, instead of his usual ten ; otherwise he would be put to death. Thoroughly frightened, he set to work with concentration. The King passed in front of his shop twice during that day, but the Ironmonger did not notice it even. With the intense concentration created by fear, he prepared all the fifty arrows, and presented them to the King by evening. With intense concentration on God created by love, or even hatred, it is possible to attain Godhead in a very short time.

The Serpent never builds a home for itself, but makes a home in any empty hole it finds. Even so, a Devotee makes do with whatever facilities come his way, and never aspires for anything more.

A Spider creates a web by drawing a thread from within its own body. Standing in the centre, it shakes the web, luring others. Some insects come with the hope of catching the spider, but fall into the web and become

prey. When the spider has finished with use of the web, it withdraws the thread into itself. Even so, the true Devotee understands that the Lord has created this world as a bundle of illusions from within Himself. And when it has served its purpose, He withdraws the creation into Himself.

A Wasp which wishes to bring forth an offspring, gets hold of a worm and seals it away in a small hole in the wall. The worm spends all its time in terror, thinking about the wasp. And as time passes, the worm itself turns into a wasp. Even so, a Devotee who spends all his time thinking about God, gradually turns divine in nature, and divine in form.

Verily, the human body is not intended for enjoying the pleasures of the world. It is a vehicle for attaining Eternal Salvation and should be used for that purpose. One Guru alone may not be enough for attaining Eternal Knowledge. A true Devotee has to learn from Nature, and from many Gurus in this world. He is limited only by his capacity to understand the deep meaning of the world around him.

Why should you be frightened ? Hold fast to God. What if the world is like a forest of thorns ? Put on shoes and walk on the thorns. Whom should you fear ? You won't have to play again the part of the 'thief' in game of hide-and-peek, once you touch the 'granny'. —*Sri Ramakrishna*

Not a Mere Piece of Cloth

JASBIR KAUR AHUJA

Jasbir Kaur Ahuja describes the evolution of the Indian National Flag and the deeper meaning of its several colours and symbols. She stays in Patiala, Punjab and has translated into Punjabi many works of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda literature.

The National Flag, the National Emblem and the National Anthem symbolize India's sovereignty, the very Soul of the nation, the oneness of various religious and language groups, tribes and culture and sub-cultures which are found in this vast country of ours. They are a source of inspiration to the diverse elements to remain united and to lay down their lives to safeguard the freedom and unity of the nation.

The National Flag, the most visible among these symbols, is not just a piece of cloth—it is a sacred symbol of the ties which bind the people together from Kashmir to Kanya Kumari. It is our sacred duty to respect it and preserve its honour at all costs.

ORIGINS

The evolution of the Indian National Flag represents a part of the history of our freedom struggle. According to certain scholars, the national flag was first hoisted on August 7, 1906 in Calcutta. Then in 1907 it was hoisted by Indian revolutionaries in Paris. The third flag was hoisted by Dr. Annie Besant and Lokmanya Tilak in 1917 during the Home Rule Movement. The first tricolour was hoisted at Vijayawada (Andhra) in 1921 when Mahatma Gandhi came to the forefront of the freedom struggle. A committee was set up to suggest a suitable form. It recommended a plain saffron flag with a *charkha* (spinning wheel) in the extreme left corner. The suggestion was changed, and in 1931 the tricolour—deep saffron, white and dark green—with a

charkha in blue on the white portion was declared the National Flag by the Indian National Congress.

In 1947 (July 22) the Constituent Assembly adopted the tricolour with the Ashoka *Chakra* as the National Flag. The *charkha* was replaced by the *Chakra* (wheel signifying dharma). It also decided that the colours should be in equal proportions and the flag should be made out of pure hand-woven *khadi*. The size was also fixed. It was this pattern of the National Flag which was hoisted on the midnight of August 15, 1947.

Before the hoisting of the first national flag in 1906, discussions on a suitable design for the flag were going on. The year 1905 is a memorable landmark in the history of our freedom movement. The whole country was against the move to partition the Bengal province, including a large number of supporters of Lord Curzon who, ignoring all protests, made the announcement on July 20. The announcement shocked the country, particularly the Congress leaders who felt insulted, humiliated and tricked. A big protest meeting was organized by the Congress on August 7 in Calcutta.

In her diary Sister Nivedita wrote about that protest meeting as “the black shadow”. The announcement strengthened the movement that was already in its full swing at that time and deepened the national sentiments. Nivedita described the movement as “a *tapasya* and *dharma*”.

IDEA IS BORN

At this juncture, the idea of a national banner expressing the unity of India suggested itself to her. "A banner," she wrote, "is at once a benison and a penance, a consecration and a rallying cry. It is an altar, at whose feet, whether for assault or defence, men's lives are freely offered up. Generations come and go, new combinations arrive and vanish but that, for which the national symbol stands, for which people fight, is remembered forever. It is steadfast as eternity."

Nivedita desired the *vajra*, or thunderbolt as the national emblem on the flag, as, according to the ancient Indian tradition, it signified "sacrifice, honour, purity, wisdom and a source of energy". The great sage, Dadhichi, sacrificed himself and gave his bones (to be transformed into a divine weapon—*vajra*) for the welfare of humanity.

Referring to the significance of the *vajra*, Nivedita said: "The selfless man is like the thunderbolt. Let us strive only for selflessness, and we become weapons in the hands of the gods. It is not for us to ask: How? And why? For us, it is only to lay ourselves down at the altar foot. The gods do the rest. It is not the thunderbolt that is invincible, but the hand that hurls it. Let not fame, or gain or pleasure have dominion over us. Be thou the sunlight, we the dew, dissolving in its heat."

In February, 1905, Nivedita wrote: "We have chosen a design for the national flag—the thunderbolt—and have already made one."

This flag was displayed in the exhibition organized by the Indian National Congress in 1906. Eminent persons like Dr. Jagadish Chandra Bose supported its adoption. In

1909 the question of a national flag was discussed in the Press. An article on the "*Vajra*" as the national flag, together with pictures, was published in *The Modern Review*.

The National Flag as it emerged from adoption in the Constituent Assembly is horizontal tricolour of deep saffron, white, and dark green in equal proportions with a wheel in heavy blue on the white portion.

SIGNIFICANCE

The topmost panel in the Flag is in deep saffron colour. It signifies courage, sacrifice, purity and renunciation. This is the colour of the *sādhus* and *sannyāsīs*. Rajput soldiers and the brave followers of Guru Govind Singh wore saffron dress while marching to the battlefield. Sivaji too had the saffron flag.

The white in the centre stands for purity and truth—truth in words, deeds, and thought. It also signifies peace, love and friendship.

The green is the symbol of life, abundance and prosperity. It is the colour of nature, which is full of warmth and love for humanity.

The green in the base panel represents rich soil and plentiful water resources—the basis of all human life. That is why it has been put at the base. To live, we need good food. The green is meant to tell us that we should make the best use of natural resources through hard work and the nature will reward us suitably.

Only when we are assured of life that we think of "good life". That is why the colour above the green is white, which stands for truth and knowledge. This is meant to tell us that our conduct should proceed from knowledge and should be guided by truth.

From "good life" we mature into a

“spiritual life”. The saffron is a symbol of renunciation. This colour is meant to tell us to develop the moral and spiritual sides of life, to become bold and courageous in speech and conduct.

Ashoka's *Dharma Chakra* has two parts—the crest and the motto. In the crest there are lions. The lion is a symbol of majesty, discipline and strength. Below the lions is the abacus—a flat slab which bears a wheel in the centre, a bull on the right, a horse on the left and outlines of two chakras at the extremes.

On the other part of the emblem is the motto: *Satyameva Jayate*.

Pandit Nehru and Dr. Radhakrishnan used to stress that colours of the Flag had no sectarian religious significance and spoke about them in philosophical terms. The orange colour, Dr. Radhakrishnan once said, denoted “renunciation or disinterestedness”. The white in the centre represents “light” for guiding our conduct, and the green shows our deep relation to the soil and the plant life on which all other kinds of life depend.

The Ashokan wheel is the “Wheel of dharma”. “*Satya* or truth, *dharma* or virtue,” he said, “ought to be the controlling principles of all those who work under this Flag.”

The Wheel denotes motion. Movement is life, stagnation is death. The Wheel, therefore, represents the dynamism of peaceful change. So the deviation from Ashoka's wheel is not a revolt against the original idea of the spinning wheel.

“The blue is the colour of the sky and the sea. There is nothing on Earth as high as the sky and nothing as deep as the sea.

The sky and the sea are symbolic of unlimited expanse. Hence the Wheel in blue is to exhort people to carry the message of the Wheel to its highest, widest and deepest extent.”

The diameter of the wheel is approximately equal to the width of the white panel. The wheel is shown on both sides of the Flag. It has twenty-four spokes and is an exact reproduction of the wheel of the Ashoka Pillar at Sarnath. The ratio of the width to the length of the Flag is two breadths to three breadths.

The National Flag should be used in a most respectful way. No flag or emblem should be placed either above the National Flag or to its right. All other flags are to be placed to its left if they are displayed in a line. When it is carried in a procession or parade, it should be on the right or in the front of the centre of the line if there is a line of other flags. When these flags are raised, the National Flag must rise the highest.

Normally, the National Flag is flown over important Government buildings like the High Courts, Secretariats, or Commissioners' offices, Collectorates and jails. But on occasions like Republic Day, Independence Day, Mahatma Gandhi's birthday and on the days of national rejoicing, it is used on a wide scale. But even on these occasions, it must not be displayed on vehicles. It should always be brought down in the evening.

While hoisting the National Flag, proper rites are observed. The occasion demands dignified ceremony. Since it is a symbol of the nation's freedom, unity and honour, citizens should be ever ready to sacrifice their lives to uphold its sanctity.

News and Reports

-: SYNOPSIS OF THE GOVERNING BODY'S REPORT FOR 1989-90

The 81st Annual General Meeting of the Ramakrishna Mission was held at Belur Math on Sunday the 23rd December, 1990 at 3-30 p.m. Swami Bhuteshananda, President of the Ramakrishna Mission was the chairman of the proceedings. A synopsis of the report of the Governing Body for 1989-90, placed before the members, is as follows:

Amidst the important developments during the year, the installation of a computerised printing unit for producing books in braille language at Coimbatore, the inauguration of a mini jute mill for providing training facilities to rural youth at Kamarpukur and the opening of new centres at Viveknagar, Tripura and Toronto, Canada deserve special mention.

Relief and Rehabilitation: In the year under report the Ramakrishna Mission did extensive relief and rehabilitation work spending a sum of Rs. 29.33 lakhs. Besides, relief articles worth about Rs. 6.19 lakhs were distributed.

Welfare Activity: The Mission spent a sum of about Rs. 42.54 lakhs by way of help to poor students, patients and aged and destitute men and women.

Medical Service: The Mission did commendable work through its 9 hospitals and 80 dispensaries including mobile ones. It served more than 45 lakh patients spending a sum of about Rs. 6.50 crores.

Educational Activities: True to tradition the academic results of our educational institutions were excellent. The Mission conducted 1,561 educational institutions which had a total students' strength of 1,32,831. A sum of Rs. 21.32 crores was spent for this purpose.

Rural and Tribal Welfare Work: The Mission did extensive work in several rural and tribal areas of the country involving an expenditure of about Rs. 2.22 crores.

Foreign Work: Our overseas centres were mainly engaged in spiritual ministration.

Excluding the Headquarters at Belur the Mission and Math had 77 and 75 branches respectively, in India and abroad.

*Ramakrishna Mission
P.O. Belur Math, Dist. Howrah
West Bengal 711 202*

Truth alone triumphs, and not untruth. Through truth alone the way to the gods lies. —*Mundaka Upaniṣad*

REVIEWS & NOTICES

THE WHEEL OF LIFE AND DEATH, by Philip Kapleau. Published by Rider, 20 Vauxhall Bridge Rd., London. 386 pages. £ 8.95.

Zen teacher Philip Kapleau addresses mainly the universal problem of death and dying, why we fear death and how to cease being anxious and start preparing for it. Pointing out that the problem of fear of death has grown to alarming proportions in the West, he quotes from "The Strange Agony of Success", a feature article written by D. Goleman in the New York Times, 24 August 1986: "Tens of thousands of young people, are finding that in achieving business success today, they have distorted their lives and fallen into emotional turmoil..." The author notes also that the innocent suffer: "Fear of death", writes Kapleau, "especially haunts the young, many of whom have come to believe that they may not live out their lives in our age of potential nuclear holocaust, mass executions, and imprisonments, wars of annihilation, rebellions, and world-wide terrorism."

The author says that the sacred texts and modern commentaries in his book, if carefully studied, can help the dying achieve peaceful deaths, can even liberate them from painful bondage of birth and death, and can hearten the living by making them realize that death, like life, is also transitory. The book is based mostly on a workshop on 'Death and Dying' Mr. Kapleau conducted a few years ago, but is drawn also from his experiences over many years as a teacher and lecturer. Handsomely bound and printed, the book is divided into five main parts on Death, Dying, Karma, Rebirth and Supplements. Some of the subdivisional topics are Death, the concept; Facing death; What it is that dies; and different case histories of death and dying. The deaths of Socrates, Duncan Phyfe, 'Leah' (1933-87), Sengchao, Sri Ramana Maharishi, and Gautama the Buddha are depicted. The following are some of the main points of *The Wheel of Life and Death* which have struck the reviewer as remarkable:

First is the author's compassionate approach to people. His aim (as he states) is to help the reader learn to live fully with life at every moment and die serenely with death—not like someone about to be dragged kicking and screaming to the scaffold, but like someone about to embark on an enticing adventure.

Second is the author's point: (said first perhaps by Gertrude Stein), "You have to learn to do everything, even to die." One may keep in mind a candle burning. Its life and its death are inseparable. If the candle should begin to yearn for its 'life' and regret the wax that is being burnt, then you can imagine the confusion! So it is the 'ego' of the human being that dies. If we are strongly attached to the 'things' of life, our death and even the thought of it will be hard to bear. But, on the other hand, if we are of a 'giving nature' and truly love life, death will have no terror for us. Modern people who live in affluent societies, says the author, tend mostly to live for themselves and have well-developed individualities or egos. They consequently fear death which they conceive (rightly) as the loss of all their worldly treasures. For them even life itself becomes a kind of sickness. The author agrees with Charles Peguy, whom he quotes:

When a man lies dying
he does not die from disease alone.
He dies from his whole life.

On the other hand, when the overinflated individual ego, or 'I' identifying itself with so many objects and emotions, gets reduced, then the transition of death also loses its pain. He who lives painfully has also to pass away in that fashion. But as Zen master Bunan put it:

Die while alive
And be thoroughly dead
Then do what you will,
All is good.

The *third* remarkable thing is that Kapleau says that *dying to the I*, means freeing oneself from attachments, from clinging to people, to wants, to hopes, to fantasies, even to ideals—(Poisoning the real with the ideal, as D. H. Lawrence put it). The author explains that "...birth and death are simply convenient labels we cling to because of our dualistically ensnared minds...The world we perceive is intellectually reconstructed and is not the real world...Therefore by training ourselves to live fully with life and die wholly with death at every moment, we are able to transcend both...We need to stop clutching at the momentary aspects of life and let go our preconceived notions of how things should or should not be. Only then can we be

awakened to a whole new world—greater, freer and more beautiful than the old ego-dominated for wrong actions in a previous life. The debts are being wiped out.”

In the Workshop, the **HOMEMAKER** (housewife, Ch. I) asks: “What is a dignified death?” And the author responds that it lies in being able to yield in the final moment to the inner mysterious force operating in the universe that takes over when all human self-striving ceases. It takes preparedness.

Fourthly, Philip Kapleau offers the practical wisdom of the East that death is not the end-all of existence for the individual. The denial of death so common in our culture, inevitably strengthens the fear of death. In fact, however, this denial is based wrongly on our common belief in an end of existence. But as there is no end of existence, there is no truth either in this concept of death. The author points out the advantage in accepting the Doctrines of *Karma* and *Rebirth*. He quotes journalist John Walters:

“Acceptance of the theory of karma and rebirth will settle many problems regarding life which previously seemed insoluble. It brings a reasonable explanation to circumstances and events, to the tragedies and comedies of life that otherwise would make the world seem one vast madhouse or the plaything of a crazed deity. Belief in karma and rebirth results in a lasting sense of calm and understanding. Life ceases to anger and surprise us, death loses its terrors. No longer do we despairingly utter those useless words, ‘Why does God let such things happen?’ When misfortunes strike us, we realize that payment is being made

“And after all,” said the great Frenchman Voltaire, “it is no more surprising to be born twice than it is to be born once!”

Fifth, and lastly, the author attempts to respond to all the often naive and childish questions, fears and doubts of ordinary people who seldom think analytically or deeply about death or put philosophy into practice. His answers are effective, warmly put and unequivocal. The sections and chapters on ‘How to Face Death’; ‘Advice to the Terminally Ill’; the discussions on cremations or burials, and the dilemma of pain, suicides and mercy deaths are satisfying and interesting. Of absorbing interest are the documented chapters on cases and evidence supporting rebirth and reincarnation. These are persuasive, and the author claims, a part of the truth of the whole phenomena of human life and existence. All kinds of evidence for rebirth are discussed—from the life of Edgar Cayce in Kentucky at the turn of the century, to the vivid accounts from the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*, depicting what are accepted as universal truths of the death-to-rebirth transition.

Readers familiar with the *Lives and Teachings* of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda will surely mark that there is nothing offensive or contradictory in *The Wheel of Life and Death*. Only there will be found differences in emphasis and religious terminology. Philip Kapleau’s book is interesting and easy, and will be widely read. Many will find it stimulating and thought-provoking.

Swami Sivaprasadananda
Mayavati.

Even those engaged in worldly activities, such as office work or business, should hold to truth. Truthfulness alone is the spiritual discipline in the Kaliyuga (this age). —Sri Ramakrishna

PRACTICAL SPIRITUALITY

Having taught the realization of non-dual Brahman, the Teacher now treats of the extinction of the mind as the sole means of realizing Brahman.

TEACHER: Wise son, leave off the mind which is a limiting adjunct giving rise to individuality, thus causing the great malady of repeated births and deaths, and realize Brahman.

DISCIPLE: Master, how can the mind be extinguished? Is it not very hard to do so? Is not the mind very powerful, restive and ever vascillating? How can one relinquish the mind?

TEACHER: To give up the mind is very easy, as easy as crushing a delicate flower, or removing a hair from butter, or winking your eyes. Doubt it not. For a self-possessed resolute seeker not bewitched by the senses, but by strong dispassion grown indifferent to external objects, there cannot be the least difficulty in giving up the mind.

DISCIPLE: How is it so easy?

TEACHER: The question of difficulty arises only if there is a mind to leave off. Truly speaking, there is no mind. When told "There is a ghost here" an ignorant child is deluded into believing the existence of the non-existent ghost, and is subject to fear, misery and troubles, similarly in the untainted Brahman by fancying things that are not, as this and that, a false entity known as the *mind* arises seemingly real, functioning as this and that, and proving uncontrollable and mighty to the unwary, whereas to the self-possessed, discerning seeker who knows its nature, it is easy to relinquish. Only a fool ignorant of its nature says it is most difficult.

DISCIPLE: What is the nature of mind?

TEACHER: To think this and that. In the

absence of thought, there can be no mind. On the thoughts being extinguished the mind will remain only in name like the horn of a hare; it will vanish as a non-entity like a barren woman's son, or a hare's horn, or a flower in the sky. This is also mentioned in the *Yoga Vāsiṣṭha*.

DISCIPLE: How?

TEACHER: Vāsiṣṭha says: "Listen, O Rama, there is nothing to speak of as mind. Just as the ether (*ākāśa*) exists without form, so also the mind exists as the blank insentience. It remains only in name; it has no form. It is not outside, nor it is in the heart. Yet like the ether, the mind though formless fills all."

DISCIPLE: How can this be?

TEACHER: Wherever thought arises as this and that, there is the mind.

DISCIPLE: If there be mind wherever there is thought, are thought and mind different?

TEACHER: Thought is the index of the mind. When a thought arises mind is inferred. In the absence of thought, there can be no mind. Therefore mind is nothing but thought. Thought is itself mind.

DISCIPLE: What is 'thought'?

TEACHER: Thought is imagination. The thought-free state is Bliss Supreme (*Śivas-varūpa*). Thoughts are of two kinds; the recalling of things experienced, and unexperienced.

DISCIPLE: To begin with, please tell me what is 'thought'.

TEACHER: Sages say that it is nothing but to think of any external object as this or that, is or is not, thiswise or thatwise, etc.

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RAMAKRISHNA MATH, BARISHA

HOME FOR THE AGED (FOR MEN ONLY)

We take this opportunity to convey our grateful thanks to those philanthropic persons and institutions with whose kind contributions it has been possible so far to finish the construction up to second floor of the proposed six-storied residential main building of the said Home managed by the monks of the Ramakrishna Order, which is the first of its kind in North-eastern India. We are also glad to state that some old men have already been residing in the Home and the construction of its **third floor** is in progress.

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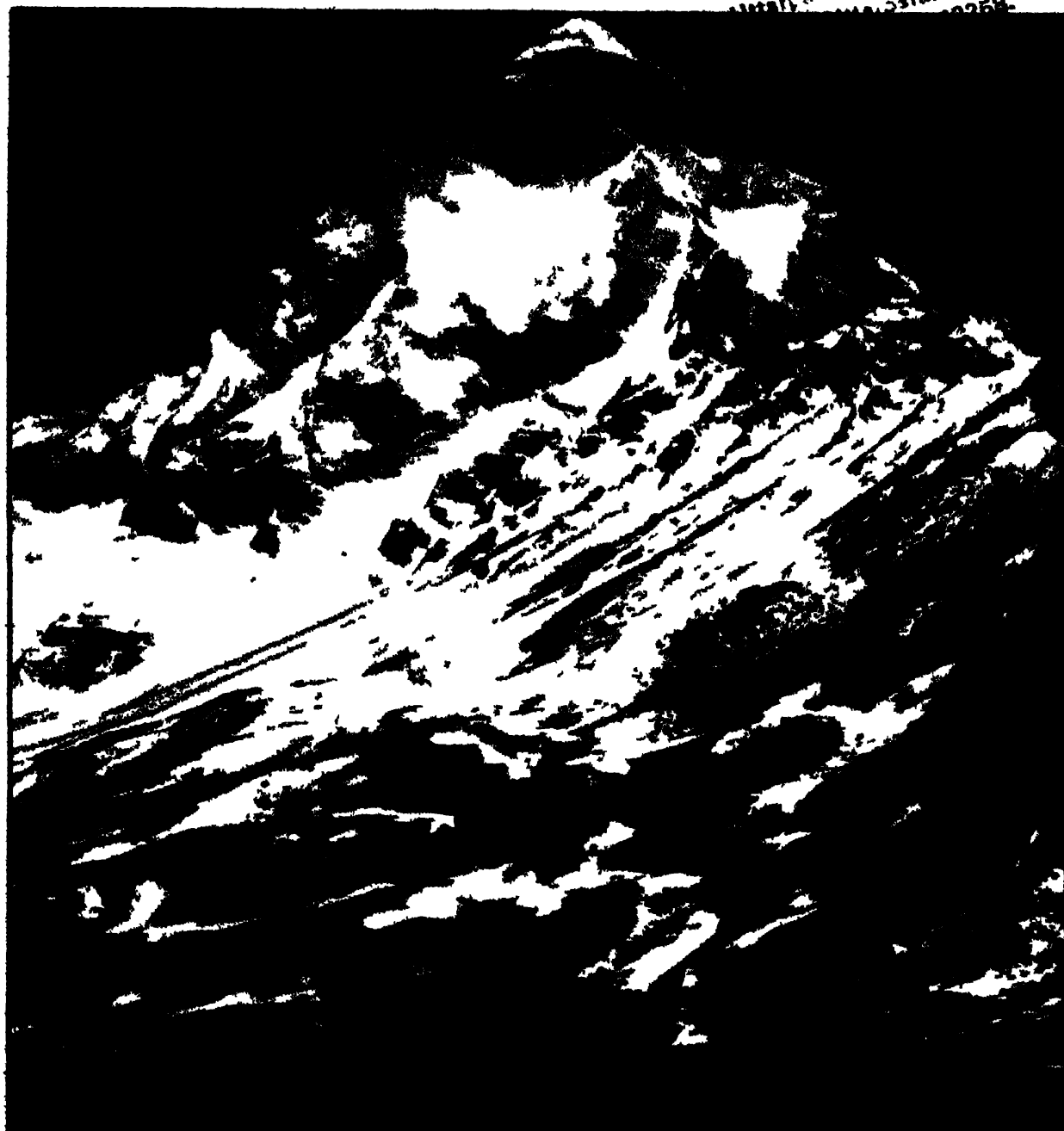
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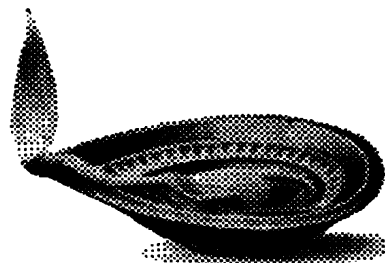
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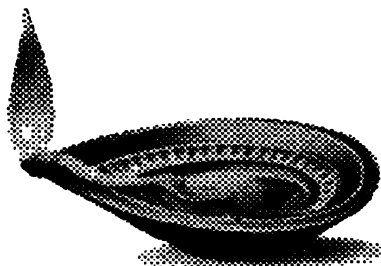
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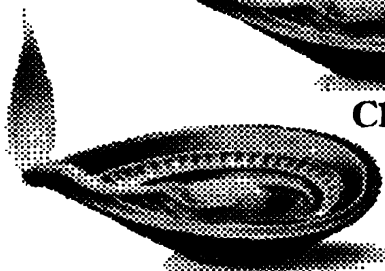
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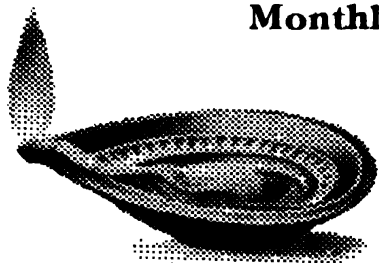
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Prabuddha Bharata

A Monthly Journal of the
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Work, work the idea, the plan, my boys, my brave, noble, good souls—to the wheel, to the wheel put your shoulders. Stop not to look back for name, or fame, or any such nonsense. Throw self overboard and work.

—Swami Vivekananda

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VOL. 96

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No. 5

The Divine Message

How long is the night to the watchman ;
how long is the road to the weary ; how
long is the wandering of lives ending in
death for the fool who cannot find the path!

If on the great journey of life a man can-
not find one who is better or at least as good
as himself, let him joyfully travel alone:
a fool cannot help him on his journey.

'These are my sons. This is my wealth.'
In this way the fool troubles himself. He
is not even the owner of himself: how much
less of his sons and of his wealth!

If a fool can see his own folly, he in this
at least is wise ; but the fool who thinks he
is wise, he indeed is the real fool.

If during the whole of his life a fool lives
with a wise man, he never knows the path
of wisdom as the spoon never knows the
taste of the soup.

But if a man who watches and sees in
only a moment with a wise man he soon
knows the path of wisdom, as the tongue
knows the taste of the soup.

A fool who thinks he is wise goes through
life with himself as his enemy, and he ever
does wrong deeds which in the end bear
bitter fruit.

For that deed is not well done when being
done one has to repent ; and when one must
reap with tears the bitter fruits of the wrong
deed.

But the deed is indeed well done when
being done one has not to repent ; and when
one can reap with joy the sweet fruits of
the right deed.

The wrong action seems sweet to the fool
until the reaction comes and brings pain,
and the bitter fruits of wrong deeds have
then to be eaten by the fool.

A fool may fast month after month eating
his food with the sharp point of a blade of
kuśa grass, and his worth be not a sixteenth
part of that of the wise man whose thoughts
feed on truth.

A wrong action may not bring its reac-
tion at once, even as fresh milk turns not
sour at once: like a smouldering fire con-
cealed under ashes it consumes the wrong-
doer, the fool.

And if ever to his own harm the fool
increases in cleverness, this only destroys his
own mind and his fate is worse than before.

For he will wish for reputation, for prece-
dence among the monks, for authority in the
monasteries and for veneration amongst the
people.

'Let householders and hermits, both, think
it was I who did that work ; and let them
ever ask me what they should do or not do.'
These are the thoughts of the fool, puffed up
with desire and pride.

Bhagavān Buddha—*The Dhammapada*

Nataraja—The Source of Arts

According to Ananda Coomaraswamy, a pioneer historian of Art, and foremost interpreter of Indian culture to the West, *Bhakti* and *Yoga* were the dominant motifs which governed early Indian Art. Sister Nivedita too voiced the same opinion. 'Great Art-epochs of history are great religious epochs—those historic moments at which the soul of man was most deeply smitten by the glory of Ideals. In accordance with this truth is the absolute agreement between Indian thought, and Indian Art...the fact that Art, like science—like religion—has her eyes upon the Unseen that transcends the seen; that the very crafts and industries of India are inspired and guided by the conviction that 'mind alone is, and matter but appears to be'.¹

There is a natural tendency in the Indian mind to make everything an approach to God, to the innate divinity that is hidden by bewildering multiplicity. Appreciation of beauty (*saundarya*) and aesthetic enjoyment (*rasāsvāda*) are not exceptions. Beauty then is the transcendental perfection in things, which transcends the thing itself and establishes a relationship with the Infinite. Beauty makes things fit to give joy to the spirit. However, aesthetic value is not an end-value, but only an instrumental value, a means for the Highest. The ultimate value is *Parama-Puruṣārtha*, or *Mokṣa*.

Mokṣa is the consummation of all the other human values—*Dharma* (the moral good), *Artha* (wealth), and *Kāma* (pleasure). Therefore, all Art forms address themselves to the task of manifesting this perfection and strive to lead human beings towards the ultimate Goal of freedom. The view that aesthetic experience is akin to mystic experience was advanced by the religious genius Plotinus of the third century A.D. Abhinavagupta of Kashmir held that the aesthetic experience at the highest level is the experience of the Self, the *Ātman* as pure Bliss. At this level of experience the duality in creation—of subject and object—disappears through intense introspection. This is also the 'Yoga of Ecstasy' according to Patañjali. All things endowed with beauty and glory are aspects of God Himself, says the *Gīta* in the tenth chapter, *Divine Manifestations*, verse 41:

*Yad-yad vibhūtamāt sattvaṁ śrīmad
ūṛjitaṁ eva vā
tad-tad evāvagaccha tvam mama tejomśa
sambhavam*

Sri Krishna says to Arjuna:

*Whatever glorious or beautiful or mighty
being exists anywhere, know that it has
sprung from but a spark of My splendour.*

Or, as the *Svetāsvatara Upaniṣad* mentions: The manifold universe is God Himself. *Puruṣa evedaṁ sarvaṁ yad bhūtaṁ yac ca bhavyam...* "The Cosmic Person is truly this whole world, whatever has been and whatever will be." (III, 15)

This guiding inspiration breathes life and freshness into all forms of Art—dance, music, sculpture, painting, architecture, and iconography. They all represent spiritual and religious idealism. A painting, a statue or a temple structure manifests a religious

1. Nivedita, *The Complete Works of*, (Calcutta: Sister Nivedita Girls' School, 1967) Vol. III, p. 48.

ideal to the devotee who contemplates it. It brings to the fore the object of devotion as if face to face with the Lover. It is only a means to visualization of profound spiritual truth. To the Indian mind Art is an effective expression of the Absolute. Nowhere in the world, perhaps, has the philosophy of Art been looked upon with such reverence or imbued with such lofty significance. The following fascinating classification attests to the transmundane nature of Art.

There are three schools of the philosophy of Art: (i) the *Rasa-Brahma-vāda* (poetry, dance, drama); (ii) the *Nāda-Brahma-vāda* (music); and (iii) *Vāstu-Brahma-vāda* (architecture). According to the propounders of these schools, Art represents the Infinite—the timeless dimension. Temple architecture specially embodies spiritual ideas relating to the yogic centres; and Indian grammar is also called the “treatise on *Śabda-Brahman*”.

Bharata makes a bold assertion in his classical treatise that the creation of art is possible to him who has mastered all knowledge and fully grasped the mystery of life and realized the oneness hidden ingeniously in the diversity. As the greatest authority on the art of dance and drama he assigns the supreme place to the *Nāṭya*. He says:

*Na tajjnām na taccilpāṇi
na sā vidyā na sā kalā
Nāśau yogo na tatkārma
natye' smin yanna drśyate*

“There is no art or science, no craft or skill or knowledge that is not covered by the supreme art of ‘*Nāṭya*’ (dance).”

Bharata's *Nāṭya Śāstra* enumerates one hundred and eight standard poses in the original dance of Natarāja. On the four walls of the entrance at the Chidambaram temple, Tamil Nadu, all these unique postures are depicted in stone sculpture. All

the dancing images of the Natarāja have certain common features. One of the right hands always is seen to hold the *damaru* (drum) and another is always in *abhaya-mudrā*, assuring His protection. In one of the left hands the Lord holds the fire, and with the other He appears in the dance movement known as the *gaja-hasta*, or the auspicious graceful sway of the elephant's trunk. Lord Śiva seems to point to his left foot which in the *anugraha-mudrā* bestows His Grace and blessings on the world. The fire denotes the infinite *ākāśa* wherein the Lord draws back to Himself the cosmos at the end of time in the Great Dissolution (*pralaya*). Siva's *damaru* also has another significance. It is sung by one of the Saiva saints thus:

“Thy hand, holding the sacred drum has made and ordered the heavens and earth and other worlds and innumerable souls.”

Is there a link between the sound of Śiva's *damaru* and the sounds of the natural world, of speech uttered by man or of the science of Sanskrit grammar? What philosophies and Arts and Enlightenment have to do with the dry realm of Grammar proves to be a fascinating question.

It is pointed out² that enlightenment is a transcendental experience, and thus beyond words. Yet the ṛsis attempted repeatedly to clothe their experiences in words in order to lead mankind searching for ultimate Truth to the same experience. The well-thought-out, carefully constructed Grammar helps to make the language more precise, and aids in the comprehension of what the language is to express.

Pāṇini, the most celebrated Sanskrit grammarian, of the fourth century B.C., as legend says, heard the pure *Nāda*, the sound

2. *Encyclopedia of Eastern Philosophy and Religion* (London: Rider, 1986) p. 265.

vibrations of Lord Siva's *damaru*, and out of them he saw flashing before the mind's eye fourteen verses of the *deva-bhāṣā* (holy language). These Pāṇini formed into the basis for the *Aṣṭādhyāyī*, his famous *Grammar* considered even today as a standard work in Sanskrit.

Nandikeśwar Kārikā, a later commentary affirms this. The fourteen verses form the bedrock of Sanskrit, thus providing the foundation for the *Aṣṭādhyāyī*. The title (meaning a Work of eight chapters) was acclaimed as a stupendous effort and created a scientific and comprehensive system for grammar in the Sanskrit language. Later Patañjali wrote a monumental commentary on this Grammar of Pāṇini.

In India the study of grammar was looked upon as a spiritual practice from the earliest times. It is not strange that grammar, like the Arts, was permeated with spiritual fervour. It is not surprising that Vivekananda, who knew and represented the great religious spirit of the country significantly said: "Our sacred motherland is a land of religion and philosophy, the birthplace of spiritual giants—the land of renunciation where, and where alone, from the most ancient to the most modern times, there has been the highest ideal of life open to man."³

Whether it was Yāska's (7th century B.C.) *Nirukta* (Etymology), or Pāṇini's *Vyākaraṇa* (Grammar), or Patañjali's *Commentary* (*Mahābhāṣya*), or Bhartṛhari's philosophy-grammar treatise, all were considered sacred books. Grammar was called an important *Vedāṅga* or auxiliary of the *Vedas*.

In the ancient days, when students acquired sufficient preparatory knowledge, then only were they allowed to commence study

of the *Vedas*. In the beginning of his *Nirukta*, Yāska in unambiguous terms states that 'Deity' and 'Self' are flower and fruit of Speech—*Devatādhyātme vā vācaḥ puṣpa-phale*. Enquiries into the genesis and ultimate nature of *Vāk*, the Power of Speech (also regarded as a Goddess), led them into a sublime region of bliss and divine consciousness. They visualized Brahman enshrined in the *Varṇamālā* (alphabet). The *Varṇas* (letters) are called *Akṣara* which denotes their eternal existence and imperishability.

The worship of the *Śabda-Brahman*, *Logos*, or Word which leads to mystical vision of the Absolute, was stressed by all the ancient grammarians. The words uttered by man (*Śabda*) are not the result of human thought and creation, but are the manifestation of divine Consciousness. Man has not invented words or speech, but words and speech are the outward expression of Consciousness, say the sages. Casting light on this, Swami Vivekananda said: "The idea that language was created by men—certain men sitting together and deciding upon words, has been proved to be wrong. So long as man has existed there have been words and language...Every idea that you have in the mind has a counterpart in a word; the words and the thought are inseparable. The external part of *one and the same thing* is what we call 'word', and the internal part is what we call thought. No man can, by analysis separate thought from word."⁴

On this profound Deity *Vāk*, or *Śabda-Brahman*, grammarians meditated and entered a dimension that lies beyond the confines of time and space, and there discovered that the Absolute Brahman is the Matrix of word or sound, and meaning. This '*Doctrine of Sphota*' marks the culmination of the mysticism of Grammar. Modern physics

3. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989) Vol. III, p. 137.

4. *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 217.

says that sound is the product of vibrations. The movement of the Spheres in the cosmos is said to produce a sound which can be heard by the Yogis contemplating the Divine Lord in deep meditation.

According to science, sound vibrations are the waves created by energy passing through a medium causing resistance. Many new discoveries are being made in the field of Ultrasonics, Supersonics and Infrasonics.

According to Tantra and Vedanta, sound or *śabda* is the cause of everything. The universe is the outcome of the Divine Sound. The vibratory states of sound, audible and inaudible, which science has put to use for human welfare in communications, medicine and so on, is a later or gross manifestation of the *Ādi-Śabda* or Primal Sound. This *Sphoṭa*, or *Anāhata Dhvani* is uncreate and suprasensory. The Lord Himself first manifested as the Name or 'Word' and then as Form. Thus the visible universe came into being. Behind the visible universe is the inexpressible, eternal *Sphoṭa*. It is the eternal Mother of all ideas or names. Explaining this, Sri Ramakrishna once said: "It is a spontaneous sound constantly going on by itself. It is the sound of *Praṇava*, *OM*. It originates in the Supreme Brahman and is heard by Yogis."⁵

During his Tantra *sādhana*, Sri Ramakrishna heard, arising naturally and unceasingly, everywhere in the universe, the *Anāhata Dhvani*, the great *Praṇava* sound which is the aggregate of all the sound of the universe. At that time he could understand the meanings of the cries of all the animals.⁶

Bhartṛhari, the great philosopher-grammarian, was not only a *Vaiyākaraṇa* (grammarian), but was also an *Advaitin*, who believed in *Śabdādvaita* and *Sattādvaita*, that the 'Word' or Absolute is the Source of everything. According to him, all knowledge becomes manifest by virtue of its resting on the verbal matrix and is also illumined by words. All knowledge thus being linguistic, the distinctions of objects are traceable to distinctions among words. The view of metaphysical monism of words (*śabdādvaita*) holds that the one word essence appears as this world of names and forms because of man's imagination as explained by Śaṅkara's Advaita. In support of this, grammarians made use of the doctrine of *Sphoṭa* (that from which meaning bursts forth). They drew a distinction between the word and articulate sound, and made the word itself the bearer of meaning. Further, the grammarians were interested in pointing out that the phonemes or articulate sounds by themselves cannot constitute the word. Therefore, as bearer of meaning, the word is an indivisible entity, the *Śabda-Sphoṭa*.

Each thought must have a word to express it, but words need not necessarily have the same phonemes, or articulate sounds. Sounds vary according to different speakers in the world. They are produced within the spatio-temporal confines. But the 'Word' is indivisible and eternal and has no spatial or temporal relations. This Reality, the Ground of all manifestation, is called *Sphoṭa* or *Śabda-Brahman* by grammarians and Brahman by Vedantins. Indian grammar as a distinct spiritual discipline was chiefly interested in establishing the 'doctrine of word monism'.

In the realm of music the splendid theory of *Nāda-Brahman* casts illumination on the mystery of sound. The tradition of musical art goes back to the *Sāma Veda*. It is said that the system of music expounded by

5. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Madras: Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, 1985) p. 416.

6. Swami Saradananda, *The Great Master* (Madras: Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, 1978) p. 232.

Bharata in his *Nāṭya-Śāstra* evolved out of the *Sāma Veda*. In Indian music the sound is not a mere sign of thought, feeling or emotion, but is an independent medium. Authorities on music say that music is the apprehension of *Nāda* (Primordial Sound) which is in the heart, and the *Śrūtis* are only the medium through which it is expressed. *Śrūti* is nothing but a manifestation of *Nāda-Brahman*. The relationship between *Śrūti* and *Nāda* is that of the actual with the potential.

Melody and rhythm of music have the power to elevate the mind to sublime heights and ultimately to lead one to the Supreme Realization. *Nāda* issues forth from the Absolute. This perpetual sound is grasped in deep meditation. Therefore *Nāḍopāsanā*—worship of music is *Yogopāsanā*—the practice of Yoga. Both have a similar approach and aim. Music of pleasant sound easily brings under control the tempestuous mind and helps in concentration. As Henry Longfellow said, "Music is the universal language of mankind." It is God who manifests Himself as beauty in all things, as the greatness in human beings, and as the melody of music.

The *Damaru-Nāda* of Lord Śiva creates the universe and all beings. This is seen in

the highest mystical experience. Dakṣa's prayer to Śiva in the *Mahābhārata* reflects the epitome of the Lord's unsurpassed glory as an Artist and the Fount of all Arts:

*Śilpikah śilpānām śreṣṭhaḥ sarvaśilpapra-
vartakah*
"Lord, You are that Artist, the greatest
of all Artists and the Promulgator of all
arts."

The *Gītā* explains this profound concept in one of its wonderful verses:

*Urdhva-mūlam adhaḥ-śākham aśvattham
prāhur avyayam...*
"The scriptures speak of the eternal
Aśvattha, the World Tree, whose roots
are in the Most High..." (XV. 1)

The truth of this finds an apt illustration in the magnificent image of the dancing Śiva. The image is not a product of the poet's rich brain, but is a supramental vision of Reality, seen by the ancients, and seeable by mystics of the modern age as well. The cosmic dance of Natarāja is a marvellous synthesis of *Dvaita* and *Advaita* and may also be regarded as a confluence of *Bhakti*, *Jñāna*, *Karma* and *Yoga*. Therefore, it is no wonder the idol has been appreciated and adored by saints, devotees, artists and even scientists down the ages.

Anyone who had the good fortune of being with the Mother for any length of time, would have witnessed how she did all her work untiringly and lived in the world without any self-centredness and external compulsions. The only compulsion she felt was the desire to relieve the sufferings of all.

—Swami Saradananda

Unpublished Letters

The following letters of the disciples and admirers of Swami Vivekananda are coming to the light of the printed page for the first time. During the Swami's lifetime and for long afterward, the devotees retained a wonderful reverence and loyalty for the great Swami. Going through the letters readers are moved to sense the profound spiritual relationship they had with the beloved Guru.

For long years these unpublished letters have lain in the archives of the Vedanta Society of Southern California, U.S.A. We are grateful to the authorities for making them available to us for publication in this Journal.

From Christine Greenstidel (1148 Beaubrin St., Detroit)—to Mrs. Betty Leggett

August 18, 1917

My dear Mrs. Leggett,

When your telegram came I remembered that from someone, somewhere, sometime ago I heard that you were in this country. In the infinity of the last few months, it, together with other things, quite escaped my memory.

When Frank Alexander came to Detroit a year ago last May, he was ill. He had had congestion of the lungs in California from the effects of which he never recovered. He was in no condition to work but there was nothing else to be done. He got back his old position on the "Free Press" and not only did the regular work but three nights a week worked overtime. He developed tubercular trouble. He hoped to get help from Christian Science and was treated by his old friend Dr. Carr and others. He grew steadily worse, and in April being unable to continue work, he returned to his friends the Rhodehamels in San Francisco. Mrs. R—tells

me that he had several severe hemorrhages as well as constant night sweats. He decided to come back to Detroit but they knew that his days were numbered. He had been in Detroit only a day or two when he developed appendicitis. He was taken to the hospital and operated upon but from the first there was practically no hope. He had no resistance and the fact that he lived a week astonished the doctors. He had no pain whatever from first to last. For this he was so grateful. He was conscious to the very end and knew. Three days before he told me that Swamiji was calling him, gave me some directions, sent messages to his friends and said goodbye. "Death is only re-birth," he said. He was not afraid. Never had I seen him so calm. Several times during the year he told me that when he left India, he knew. In speaking of his Indian experiences, he always said, "I have lived. What does it matter whether this body goes now or later?" He became master of himself in a most marvellous way. I could not have believed it had I not seen it. He was in very truth Swamiji's child. Had he lived ten years longer he would have moved the world—spiritually, of course I mean. What Swamiji began, he would have carried forward. What a tragedy it seems to be!

He was always so grateful for the oppor-

tunities you gave him and his personal feeling for you was deep.

Are you likely to pass through Detroit ? I should so much like to see you.

Ever sincerely yours,
Christine Greenstidel

* * *

*From Romain Rolland to
Swami Shivananda*

Villemeaux, (Vand)
Swami Villa Olga
Sept. 12, 1927

Dear and respected Swami Shivananda :

Allow a Frenchman who profoundly admires Sree Ramakrishna to address himself to you, who had the good fortune to be his personal disciple.

A year ago, my sister Madeleine Rolland and myself read the "Life of Sree Ramakrishna" and the other publications which have been dedicated to him by the Advaita Ashrama. I want to make known to the West that Divine Source of Love and Light. Nothing is more necessary to the humanity of our time, than this revelation of the harmonious unity of all religious faiths, than this communion with God manifold in form and yet Himself without form, who is the Being of all living beings.

But it is an extremely delicate task to translate (that is to say transpose) into a western book a personality so fundamentally Indian as that of Sree Ramakrishna. For certain of his religious experiences would be incomprehensible to almost all the European public and will ever run the risk of concealing the most essential qualities of his life and thought, which could be a powerful benefit (assistance) to it. That is why I am proceeding slowly ; I am waiting until there appears in myself a living and true harmony of the work which I wish to write.

It is very precious to me to be able to

communicate directly with you, who saw with your own eyes this extraordinary man. Our epoch, too intellectualistic as it is, has a tendency to doubt the human existence of all the superhuman personalities of history. Even when it pretends to respect the lofty ideals of which they were the torches, it sees in them only symbols created by the spirit of a race and of an age ; one sees today those who deny that Jesus or Buddha had ever existed. It will not be slow in doing the same for Sree Ramakrishna, if his living witnesses do not leave in writing the proof of his life amongst them on the earth. I should like to make known to the European public your direct testimony.

I wish also to ask you some enlightenment on an important question: the problem of suffering with Ramakrishna. I have read lately an excellent article in the Prabuddha Bharata on the question of "Service" with Vivekananda and Ramakrishna, in which it was maintained that the great disciple had only drawn out the consequences of his Master's teaching—of his "adoration of the divine in man" & that there was no disagreement between them. But it appears to me that the more essential feature of the personality of Vivekananda was the mournful and heroic obsession of universal suffering and of evil to fight against or to console. Is it not the (same) central idea, quite different from the universal divine vision, which filled Ramakrishna with an ecstasy of joy and with great faith in the Eternal ?

What was his attitude with regard to the cruel injustice of nature and of society of unfortunate people and of those who oppressed or persecuted ? Was he content simply to love them ? Did he not seek to help them ? and has he not precisely destined his great disciple Vivekananda to do that work ?

Believe me, dear Swami Shivananda

Yours affectionately,
Romain Rolland

The Mother of All

SWAMI ATMASTHANANDA

Based on the author's talks delivered at Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Calcutta, readers here become familiar with another intimate perspective of the life of Sri Sarada Devi 'Refuge of all beings'. The Swami is Assistant Secretary of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, Belur Math and is a senior monk of the Order.

It was forty years ago at the lonely cottage of the Ramakrishna Ashrama at Kishenpur—a wintry morning, about seven o'clock. The golden rays of the December sun were just beginning to shed their pleasant warmth. At a distance the Shivalik ranges could be seen as if lost in meditation, and all around were many blossoming shrubs and trees. Somewhere in the ravine below a brook could be heard rushing noisily past the ashrama. Some Himalayan songbirds were singing out an aubade. The birthday of the Holy Mother was only a day or two away. Seated on a carpet inside the cottage was Swami Jagadanandaji, a senior monk, Vedanta scholar and disciple of the Mother. Another one was seated on the carpet too, a young newly ordained sannyasi, eager to learn Vedanta from him. The young monk began:

"It is possible to grasp, to understand a little of the immense spirituality of Sri Ramakrishna. It can at least be inferred to some extent. But in the case of the Holy Mother, we are unable to form an idea of her depth, however much we ponder on it. How many scholars and savants used to go to Sri Ramakrishna! And Dakshineswar where he practised so many spiritual disciplines, what a wonderful place it was! But Mother attained all her spiritual realization in such a silent, unobtrusive and natural way, even while bearing the burden of so many household responsibilities and chores. Really,

Sir, it is something mysterious, unprecedented, incomparable!"

"Right you are!" exclaimed Jagadanandaji. "It is not possible to understand Mother. How great she was, how deep she was, who indeed was this Mother—it is not possible for us to know. All we know is, she is Mother." While he was talking thus about the Mother, the venerable old Swami was overwhelmed with emotion, and tears started rolling down his cheeks. Observing how even a man of knowledge, well established in Vedanta, looked upon the Holy Mother, we think none but a foolhardy person would attempt a simplistic portrayal of her life and greatness. But then, our Mother is of such nature that every one of her children thinks that he knows his Mother well. Not only this, he thinks that nobody else knows her quite so well as he does! Mother also never rejected anyone as her child, so even the foolhardy feel encouraged. In her house an ignoramus has as much right as a learned man. She herself said once: "I am the Mother of the virtuous and the Mother of the wicked. I am the Mother of the good and the Mother of the bad....Whoever addresses me as 'Mother', I am his or her Mother. I am the Mother of all." Now let us see how this great Mother of the Universe, who herself behind the veil of modesty, appears to an ordinary mind limited by ignorance.

Hindu mythology and epics have given a high place to the ideal of chastity in marri-

age, in the sense of one-pointed devotion to one's husband. Sita's accompanying her husband to the forest, Sāvitṛī's devotion to Satyavān and her victory over the King of Death, and Vishnupriya's embracing the ascetic life after Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's ordination into *sannyāsa*, are all well known examples of wifely chastity. Then there were the spiritually illumined women exemplified by the *Brahma-vādinīs* (Knowers of Brahman) of the *Upaniṣads* and the saintly nuns in Christianity and Buddhism. But, we think, in the history of mankind the *Ideal of Motherhood*, universal motherhood, was really originated and fully expressed for the first time by the Holy Mother, Sri Sarada Devi.

Of course, everybody knows of the love, devotion and sacrifice of an ordinary mother for her own children. And how precious it is to us, but that expression and unfailing example of motherly love towards all—approaching perfect universal motherhood—is unique and *non-pareil* in the life of Sarada Devi. The ideal of 'God of all' has been exemplified in the lives of Krishna, Christ and others. But the Ideal of 'Mother of all' is a startlingly new phenomenon in the world. How many types of relationships an ordinary individual has to enter into every day—as father or mother, husband or wife, son or daughter, master or servant, doctor or patient, shopkeeper or customer, and so on! But has ever a woman demonstrated perfect equanimity and same-sighted motherhood for all creatures of the universe as did Sarada Devi, the Holy Mother? Rarely, can one ever find her likeness even in the whole history of religion and spirituality.

The lowly grass and the mighty tree—both have their origin in the earth. The thorny cactus and the fragrant jasmine—both sprout from the ground; there they all grow. Hence the earth is called 'Mother-Earth'. She gives birth and sustenance to

all living beings without any distinction. She rejects none.

God incarnates Himself on earth as the *Avatār*. There is a special manifestation of divinity in the *Avatār*. The scriptures declare that the coming of the *Avatār* is to protect the virtuous and punish the wicked. That means, the *Avatār* functions on the basis of acceptance and rejection.

In Hindu philosophy God's Incarnation is always associated with *Śakti*, the Divine Power. God comes to Earth in various forms in different countries at different periods in history and incarnates Himself. In some forms the *Avatār* reveals the terrible aspect of Godhood, in some forms He reveals God as the Teacher of mankind. All these manifestations are within the ambit of *Śakti*. The *noblest* manifestation of *Śakti*, however—Universal Motherhood, had never been popularly associated with the *Avatār* previously. It was only in this most recent Avatarhood, of Sri Ramakrishna, that we find His much acclaimed association with the Divine Mother, the Primal Energy of the Universe.

When we turn to the life of Sri Sarada Devi, we find that she was nothing else than the Mother of All. It is well known that she did not care for any other attribute, and never wanted anyone to look upon her in any other way except 'as Mother'. The *Avatār's* consideration of virtue and vice, or acceptance and rejection, was practically absent in her life. Besides, most amazingly, she was utterly unencumbered by any of the splendour found associated with *Avatārs* or other great figures in religion. She had also no need to take birth under the compulsion of historical circumstance, as the *Avatārs* had. But she was the Fountain or Source of the Universal Creative Power. Where there is creation, where there is birth, there is motherhood. Motherhood itself is the

First Cause. There is no cause beyond that. The Divine Mother is the uncaused Cause of the Universe.

It was this divine Motherhood of God that Sri Sarada Devi revealed in her artless statement: "If any child of mine gets covered with dust or dirt, I myself have to wash him and take him on my lap." She had totally transcended all the polarities of life—virtue and vice, good and bad, knowledge and ignorance, purity and impurity. She had no need to undergo any austere discipline to attain this, for it was natural to her. She Herself is the Creatrix of all diversity! Sri Sarada Devi is the fullest manifestation of Mother Power. The *Avatār* may accept certain people and reject certain others. But the Mother accepts all—including those rejected by the *Avatār*. She is ever ready to take anyone onto her lap. No need of fear of punishment from her, she gives only protection and indulgence to everyone.

Mother-Power is eternal and universal. Differences in birth and caste do not affect its universality. On the contrary, it mellows the harshness of contemporary social rules and customs. The flow of Mother's love breaks down all walls of separation. On her lap Swami Saradananda and Amjad were alike—two sons. In her arms and at her feet 'Gopal's mother' and the 'mad aunt'; the world-renowned Swami Vivekananda and the drunk Padmavinode, all are equal.

Although the Holy Mother treated all as her children, she did not ignore anybody's temperament or basic attitude towards life. Sri Ramakrishna used to follow certain customs and traditions of orthodox Hinduism. The Mother also observed them in her worship of the Master. Once when she was getting down from a bullock-cart, some sweets which had been brought for the Master's worship fell down and so could not be offered. The Mother remarked then,

"The sweets have been polluted by the touch of people belonging to other castes. The Master could not eat such things. That is why they fell down. There is no need to grieve over the loss."

The Holy Mother used to tell her children: "At the time of your death I will be there with you. But if you want to live in peace right now, do what I ask you to do." The embodiment of purity that she was, she was eager to purify them before they finally went to her.

Sri Ramakrishna himself established her in the all-embracing, all-forgiving universal Motherhood. This was remarked upon one time by the Mother herself: "The Master had the attitude of mother towards everybody in the world. It is to spread and glorify that attitude that the Master has left me on earth this time." Was it because he looked upon her as the Mother of all that he offered the last oblation of his austerities to her?

Sri Ramakrishna was very particular about purity in personal conduct and could not bear the company of immoral persons. Once he noticed a woman who had led a rather loose life in her youth frequenting the room where the Holy Mother stayed. He asked the Mother: "Why is that woman here? She is a public woman. Why talk with her?" The Mother simply said, "She now talks only of God. What is the harm in that?" She continued to allow the unfortunate woman to visit her as before. Can a mother reject her child who has sought the refuge of her lap? There are numerous such touching incidents in her life.

When people brought gifts of fruits, sweets and other things to Sri Ramakrishna, he would usually send those things to Holy Mother who would promptly distribute them to the women devotees and others who stayed with her or who visited. One day the Master wanted to caution her about this

'thrifless habit'. But the Mother walked away with such a grave expression on her face that the Master felt uneasy and sent somebody to pacify her. She could never brook any interference with her motherly affections toward the devotees or to unfortunate ones.

Didn't the Mother reprimand or punish anyone? Of course she did—but only to set right the behaviour or purify the minds of those children who had erred. When Harish, whose brain had been deranged by poison administered by his wife, became threateningly aggressive, the gentle and bashful Sri Sarada Devi assumed that terrible aspect of the Divine Mother known as *Bagalāmukhī* and dealt with him severely. But the drubbing that Harish received that day at her hands cured him of his madness. He afterwards went to a holy place and spent his time in spiritual practice. As one famous Sanskrit hymn by Saṅkara puts it, 'There can be a bad son (*kuputra*), but there can never be a bad mother (*kumātā*).' A mother may scold or punish, but will never curse her children. It is only her love that gives the mother the authority to punish her children. When she punishes, it is only for the child's good.

One day Sri Ramakrishna was sitting on the small cot and Sri Sarada Devi was sweeping the floor of his room. Unexpectedly she stopped sweeping and asked, "*Who am I to you?*" Without a moment's hesitation, the Master replied, "*You are my blissful Divine Mother.*" Sri Sarada Devi had become 'Mother' to Sri Ramakrishna! A husband looking upon his wife as mother!—this is almost an inconceivable thing. On another occasion, Holy Mother was massaging the Master's feet. She asked him, "*How do you regard me?*" Again, his reply was at once forthcoming: "*The Mother who is in the (Kali) temple, the Mother who gave birth to this body, the same Mother is now*

massaging my feet. Really, I see you as the true form of the Blissful Mother."

Sri Ramakrishna never addressed the Holy Mother by using the familiar pronoun '*tui*' (thou), but always used the more respectful word '*tumi*' (you). The Master discharged all the normal duties of a husband to his wife, and yet they both lived immaculately pure lives. Their relationship never descended to the physical level. Sri Ramakrishna's performance of the *Sodāṣī* worship, in which he regarded his wife as the Deity, was in fact a ritual transfiguration of Sri Sarada Devi into the Divine Mother of the Universe. With that, Sri Ramakrishna brought her to equality with himself, put the seal on her divinity, and she has remained the Blissful Mother ever since.

At Jayrambati, the mother of Holy Mother, Shyamasundari Devi, had a special affection for her eldest daughter. It is customary for Hindu mothers sometimes to address their own daughters as 'Ma' (mother). Shyamasundari Devi also used to do that. But she thought of her daughter not as an ordinary mother, but as Goddess Lakṣmi Herself. One day she asked her divine daughter: "Who indeed are you, my darling? Will I ever be able to understand your true nature?" And she used to say to the Holy Mother, "May I have you as my daughter again!" (meaning in her next birth). Mother's younger brother, known to her devotees as 'Uncle Kali', reminiscing about the love and care with which she looked after him and his other brothers in their childhood, used to say, "Our sister is Lakṣmi (Goddess of Fortune) incarnate." Her nieces and sisters-in-law, some of whom used to give much trouble to Mother, even after they were grown up, were nevertheless conscious of her divinity. Even distant relatives, some of whom were older than the Mother, used to look upon her as their own Mother.

Once during the worship of the Goddess Jagaddhatri at Jayrambati, a pious Brahmin, Ramhriday Ghoshal, of a neighbouring village entered the place where the Goddess was enshrined. There he saw the Holy Mother sitting completely quiet, absorbed in meditation. He kept his eyes fixed on her for a long time, for, as he told later, he could not make out who was the Deity and who was the Mother! A pious woman of Jayrambati, who was one of the Mother's companions from her childhood, known to the devotees as Aunt Bhanu (*Bhanu Pisi*), had a vision of the Holy Mother as a goddess with four arms. There was another poor woman, 'Mrigendra's mother', who used to prepare popped rice (*muḍi*) and do other odd jobs in the Mother's home at Jayrambati. She used to see now and then Holy Mother in a celestial form. She regarded Holy Mother as the Goddess Rājarājeśwarī.

Members of Sri Ramakrishna's family as well, at Kamarpukur, used to revere Sarada Devi as the Mother. The Master's young nephew Shivaram was Mother's godson. One morning he suddenly appeared at Jayrambati just to see the Mother. In the evening Mother asked him to return to Kamarpukur as he was supposed to do worship there, but Shivaram, after going a short distance, returned and fell down at Holy Mother's feet crying, "Mother, tell me what will be my lot!" Though the Mother tried to console him, he wouldn't be pacified. "You have to take over my burden," he insisted, "and tell me that you are *what you had earlier told me you were*." On an earlier occasion Mother had admitted to Shivaram that she was the Divine Mother Kālī. Now, unable to bear the earnest entreaties of Shivaram, she placed her hands on his head and declared in a solemn voice, "*Yes, that is so.*" This sent a thrill through Shivaram.

He lifted his head and, kneeling before her, chanted the well-known 'Salutation Hymn' of the *Chāṇḍī* beginning: "*Sarva-mangala-mangalye...*" He went away fully convinced that the Holy Mother was the wielder of people's destiny. Shivaram's elder sister's name was Lakṣmi. A widow from her childhood and an advanced adept in the Vaishnava mode of *sādhana*, spiritual practice, she always looked on the Master and the Holy Mother as non-different from each other.

Orthodox Hindu widows are prohibited by custom from wearing ornaments, red-bordered saris, and so on. But the Holy Mother wore them in obedience to the Master whom she saw several times in visions after his passing away. This was regarded by some of the people of the village as a breach of law, and many gave in to the temptation of malicious thoughts and idle gossip. Holy Mother was then staying in the village after the Master's passing away and felt wounded when some of those remarks reached her ears. But Prasānnamayī, the much respected daughter of Dharmadas Laha of Kamarpukur, the friend and benefactor of the Master's father, came to her rescue. Prasānnamayī silenced the scandal-mongers by declaring, "Gadai (the Master's childhood name) and Gadai's wife are divine beings." Dhani, the poor blacksmith woman who was Gadai's nursemaid, and her sister Shankari also held the same view. Gadai's classmate Ganesh Ghoshal once came to see the Holy Mother. When she proceeded to bow down before him, he protested vehemently that it would be inauspicious for a son to be saluted by his mother. Saying so, he himself fell on his knees and saluted her. It is obvious that almost everyone in Kamarpukur recognized the divine Motherhood of Sri Sarada Devi in some form or other.

(To be concluded)

Sri Ramakrishna Touched Them

—Navachaitanya Mitra

SWAMI PRABHANANDA

Continuing his series of articles, the resourceful author tells us more about yet another of the lesser known personalities who came into close contact with Sri Ramakrishna and whose names are mentioned in Sri Rāmākṣṣṇa Kathāmṛta. Swami Prabhananda is Assistant Secretary of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, Belur Math.

It is not known exactly when Navachaitanya Mitra of Konnagar came in contact with Sri Ramakrishna for the first time. It might have been in the last part of 1878 or the early part of 1879, and it was at Dakshineswar. Rather tall in height and fairly strongly built with sharp features, Navachaitanya had worked for the British Government almost half his sixty years when he met Sri Ramakrishna. Till then Navachaitanya knew little about the Master. Crossing the Ganga one day by country boat, he came to Dakshineswar to see the Saint. There he found a middle-aged calm figure, an intelligent face beaming with joy, a man confident in his realizations and with unbounded faith in God. That was Sri Ramakrishna around 1878. Gazing intently at the Master, Navachaitanya could hardly assess the strange man sitting in front of him. Nevertheless, he realized he was in the presence of a flood of divine love, the profundity of which he could barely surmise, but he was captivated. Also, he felt a tug at his heart strings. Mystical yet rational was the Saint's demeanour; charged with loving concern for others were his words and actions; rather inexplicable but compelling was the atmosphere that surrounded Sri Ramakrishna. Navachaitanya's soul was stirred.

Navachaitanya Mitra, later endearingly called Nabaichaitanya, or simply Nabai by

Sri Ramakrishna, belonged to Konnagar's Mitra family renowned for its piety, charity and progressive outlook. His father, Pitambar, owned some landed property and was engaged in a clerical job under the British Government. After several assignments in different towns of the then United Provinces, he was transferred to Calcutta. Born some place in the U.P., Navachaitanya had his school education in some of the towns where his father served. His childhood was happy and secure in the middle class household where he grew up sharing the values of his God-fearing parents. Following the footsteps of his father he joined in the Government service and worked at Rawalpindi, Lahore and Lucknow. Finally Navachaitanya secured a suitable government job at Calcutta and settled there. By his humility, soft temperament and concern for others Navachaitanya endeared himself to all. But strong-willed and sincere in his faith and practices, he always appeared as somewhat uncompromising in his attitude to religion.

He married Satyabhama, a devout lady, known for her simplicity and generous heart. They had two sons, Atulkrishna and Pratulkrishna and four daughters, Suhasini, Subhasini, Pramodini and Amodini.¹ Self contented though he was, Navachaitanya

¹. Most of the information about the family has been furnished by Amarendranath Mitra, a great grandson of Navachaitanya Mitra.

experienced several swings of domestic happiness—lost some and recovered some—typical of a middle class Bengali family. He survived Satyabhama by about two decades. Against this, particularly after settling at Konnagar, Navachaitanya distinguished himself over the years by his musical talent and his devotion to spiritual practices.

At a tender age Navachaitanya became attracted towards the family deity, Gopinath Jeu, encouraged by his devout mother who showed deep passion for serving the Deity. As an adult he developed a strong desire to have direct communion with Him. His great grandfather, whose name was Ramdas Mitra, had earlier lived at Barisha in the outskirts of Calcutta and had once gone to Vrindavan on receiving some instruction in a dream. Taking the cue from the dream, Ramdas searched out the stone image of Radha-govinda he had dreamt of, and returning home he installed the image in a newly constructed temple in the southern part of Konnagar. (The temple is still extant and now is at the address 11 & 12 Amritalal Banerjee Street.) Before this Ramdas had purchased three acres of land with two ponds and constructed a three-storied building there. With this building many memories are associated with the Saint of Dakshineswar. After the installation Ramdas renamed the Deity Gopinath Jeu. This occurred in 1055 V.S. (during the 17th century A.D.). By planting trees and scented flowers Ramdas created a pleasant atmosphere around the place. Also he erected a *Dolmanch* and *Rāsmānch* (sites for festivals to Sri Krishna and Sri Chaitanya) at the north-west corner of the temple. To enable the offering of cooked food to the temple Deity Ramdas, according to scriptural injunctions, dedicated the temple in favour of the family priest. Later, to ensure uninterrupted worship of the Deity in future, Ramdas executed a Devottar Deed for the land and building he possessed at Konnagar

and also for the two plots of land, one of twenty-six *bighas* at Lakshmikantapur, and another of twenty-four *bighas* at Uttarpara Chanditala, which he endowed for the purpose.² Devoutly attached to Gopinath Jeu, Navachaitanya tried to earn the favour of the Lord through singing of devotional songs. In this he was a great adept.

Sprawling across more than 4.33 sq. kms. of land, modern Konnagar lying on the western side of the Ganga, is now dotted with chimneys of industries and residential quarters. In early days however it was a prosperous village, mentioned in Bipradas Piplai's *Manasa Mangal*, composed in A.D. 1495. As a seat of learning its celebrity reached its peak during the days of Ananda-chandra Bhattacharya Sarvabhauma in the later half of the 17th century. The Christian missionaries of Serampore opened over a hundred elementary schools throughout Bengal, including one at Konnagar during 1817-18. Sivchandra Dev founded the Konnagar High School as early as 1855. With the growth of European trade and industry Konnagar rose to prominence. Early in the 19th century there was a dock where small ships were built. A number of industrial undertakings based on jute, cotton, iron, etc. turned the quiet village into an industrial town. In the course of its urbanization it formed a ward of Serampore in 1865 and earned the status of a municipality in 1944.³ The twelve Siva temples, arranged in two

2. On 27 January 1864, Amritalal Mitra, Navachaitanya Mitra, Nandalal Mitra, and Navinchandra Mitra—all the four descendants of Ramdas Mitra, executed a deed of partnership before the Deputy Registrar of Deeds, Serampore, T. W. Bray, with the stipulation that every one of them would be legally and morally bound to worship the Deity, Gopinath Jeu, so long he continues to enjoy the property of land and building dedicated to Gopinath Jeu.

3. Amiya Kumar Mazumdar, *West Bengal District Gazetteers*, Hooghly, 1972.

groups on either side of a broad *ghat* leading to the Ganga, is famous. The Vaiṣṇava influence culminated in the setting up of a *Haribhaktipradāyini Sabha* in 1870. Among the luminaries of the 19th century which may be mentioned are Raja Digambar Mitra (1818-79) and Dinabandhu Nyayaratna (1819-95). But the most significant event was the visit of Paramahansa Ramakrishna (1836-86) to Konnagar.

Sri Ramakrishna was then living on the other side of the Ganga at the Dakshineswar temple. Well known for his demonstration of the highest religious experiences, his name was familiar to the people of Calcutta. There was none in history who had excelled him either in extensity of religious experience or in depth of feeling and sympathy for humanity. But he was himself more of a mystery than any of the many characters he had shaped. To unravel the puzzle of the greatness of the man behind a mask of apparent illiteracy and simplicity, many tried to fathom him but failed. But any guileless man who approached Sri Ramakrishna straight would find the door of his heart open and discover the wonderful source of divine joy that he truly was. Many considered him a re-incarnation of Sri Chaitanya. Knowledgeable people were wonderstruck by his religious ecstasies which he had achieved through a life of purity and concentration and, much more so, due to hearing words of highest wisdom from his lips. People thronged around him. At the very first sight of the Saint, Navachaitanya felt an inexplorable but irresistible attraction towards him. After several visits, it dawned upon him that the Lord of his heart, Gopinath Jiu, was appearing before him in the guise of the Paramahansa of Dakshineswar. He considered his meeting with the Saint itself was indicative of his Lord's grace upon him. The Saint too was pleased to notice the new arrival's devotional nature.

A number of Navachaitanya's relations soon came within the charming circle of Sri Ramakrishna's influence. His nephew, Manomohan Mitra, who was also a neighbour of his, came in contact with the Master in November 1879. Manomohan's third sister Visweswari was married to Rakhalchandra Ghosh, later regarded as the spiritual son of Sri Ramakrishna. His cousin Ramchandra Dutta, though a householder disciple, was very close to the Master. His youngest brother-in-law, Balaram Singha, joined the Ramakrishna Order of monks later. After Manomohan's introduction to the Master, Navachaitanya would sometimes go to Dakshineswar alone, and at other times in the company of Manomohan. Whenever he would find a favourable occasion he would offer devotional songs for the Master (called *Saṅkīrtan*) which Sri Ramakrishna liked much. The latter began addressing him as Nabaichaitanya or simply Nabai. The following few years, as long as Sri Ramakrishna was in his physical body, were the most joyous and fruitful in Navachaitanya's life.

Sri Ramakrishna could see into his soul. Pleased with Navachaitanya's sincerity and hankering for spiritual growth, Sri Ramakrishna began offering him necessary guidance. Navachaitanya accepted him as his Guru. Nava strongly desired that the Master would grace his house at Konnagar by paying a visit. In response to his repeated imploring Sri Ramakrishna visited the house several times, the first time being on 3rd December 1882.⁴ Sri Ramakrishna's presence there turned the day into a day of festivity. All the members of the Mitra family and their neighbours were present. In the afternoon Sri Ramakrishna was taken out in a procession to the accompaniment of *Saṅkīrtan* led by Navachaitanya himself. Nava-

4. According to *Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa Puṇthi*, Sri Ramakrishna had begun visiting the village of Konnagar earlier than this.

chaitanya and his companions bade the Master farewell on the bank of the Ganga. The latter took a boat for Dakshineswar.

The reverential attitude of the people of Konnagar prompted Navachaitanya and his nephew to think of ways to propagate the message of the Master there. Urged on by Navachaitanya, Ramchandra and Manomohan began visiting Konnagar every Saturday and preaching in public meetings the greatness of Sri Ramakrishna. In evenings they used to meet in the parlour of Manomohan to discuss the import of the Master's life and teachings. And on Sunday mornings they held a session of devotional songs in the parlour and took out processions, singing songs through the streets.

Several others, Kedar Chatterji, Nityagopal Basu and Harish Kundu used to participate in these programmes, which soon, however, were suspended by the Master's intervention.

Invited by the *Haribhakti Pradāyini Sabhā* of Konnagar, Sri Ramakrishna deputed Ramchandra and Manomohan there. Following Ramchandra's talk on "What is True Religion", *sāṅkīrtan* was started and Ramchandra, Manomohan and Navachaitanya began dancing to the joyful music. Being flooded with emotion Manomohan lost himself in ecstasy. Some devotees once carried him on their shoulders, walking along the roads and shouting "Hari Bol" (Chant the name of Hari) all the time. Manomohan came back to his senses at about three



*House of Navachaitanya Mitra at Konnagar:
Sri Ramakrishna visited this House several times*

o'clock the following morning. While this drama was going on at Konnagar, Sri Ramakrishna was himself clapping his hands and uttering, "Let a spell be cast!"

Sunday, 11 March 1883 was a sprightly spring morning in Dakshineswar. The devotees came that day to celebrate the birthday of the Master. From early morning Sri Ramakrishna was in spiritual fervour, part of the time his mind soaring in the spiritual realm. At other times he chanted the name of God, every word showering nectar into the hearts of the devotees. Some devotees from Konnagar arrived singing *Kīrtan* to the accompaniment of drums and cymbals. The elderly Navachaitanya was their leader. As the party reached the north-east verandah of Sri Ramakrishna's room, the Master joined in the music, dancing with them intoxicated with divine joy. Now and then he plunged into *samādhi* and stood transfixed like a statue. While he was in *samādhi*, the devotees put thick garlands of fragrant jasmine flowers around his neck. Sri Ramakrishna passed alternately through three moods of divine consciousness: the inmost, the semiconscious and the conscious. It was indeed a sight for gods to see. Navachaitanya felt overwhelmed, all the while musing that Sri Chaitanya must have re-incarnated in the form of Sri Ramakrishna.

Again on 1 March 1885, the birthday of Sri Chaitanya, the devotees assembled at the Dakshineswar temple. Sitting on a mat spread on the floor Navachaitanya intently watched Sri Ramakrishna, who was seated on the small couch, absorbed in deep *samādhi*. The devotees observed a divine glow on his countenance. Partially returning to consciousness of the world, Sri Ramakrishna asked Mahimacharan to say something about love of God. Mahima chanted from the *Nārada Pāncharātra*:

What need is there of penance if God is worshipped with love?

What is the use of penance if God is not worshipped with love?...⁵

After a while Narendranath came. The sight of him gladdened Sri Ramakrishna. The latter inspired Narendra with the spirit of renunciation. With great emotion welling up in his heart and casting a tender look on Narendra, Sri Ramakrishna sang:

We are afraid to speak, and yet we are afraid to keep still...

Navachaitanya and the others watched the scene silently. They felt that some secret passed between the Master and Narendra. In the afternoon the devotees listened to Navachaitanya singing in melodious voice. About this time the Master went to the temples of Radhakanta and Kali to offer *abhir* (the red powder used in the Dolyātrā festival). On his return to the room he threw some of the powder on the bodies of Narendra and the other devotees. They all took the dust of his feet reverentially. After a while Navachaitanya and the others began again to sing. The Master joined them, and soon was dancing vigorously drunk with divine love. After the singing was over Sri Ramakrishna said, "This is the one thing needful, the chanting of God's name. All else is unreal. Love and devotion alone are real, and other things are of no consequence."⁶ Were these words meant specially for him? Navachaitanya thought. He felt blessed.

Gradually it dawned on him that simply uttering God's name cannot take one far. The idea must sink into one's mind. The lips and the mind must go together in singing the glory of God. A picture does not take on bare glass. Mind trapped in enjoyment and attachment cannot truly appreciate the

5. 'M', *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, Trans. Swami Nikhilananda (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, 1985) p. 388.

6. *Ibid.*, pp. 707-715.

glory of God. The mind needs to be cleansed by the spirit of renunciation and painted with the silver iodide of bhakti. Then only the mind will take a good impression of the name and form of God, the Beloved. Being convinced of this idea Navachaitanya decided to renounce hearth and home. He got one cottage built on the bank of the Ganga adjacent to Panchu Datta's *ghat* and began practising *japa* and meditation in solitude.

In the '*Gospel*' we find next mention of Navachaitanya in the account of events on 7th September 1884. An arrangement had been made by Ramchandra Dutta and his music teacher, Shyamadas, was entertaining Sri Ramakrishna and the devotees with his *sankīrtan*. Shyamadas was singing with his party:

Dry as a desert seemed the happy lake to them:

The Chatak died of thirst, gazing towards the clouds....

Though Shyamadas was singing of the gopis' sorrow at separation from Sri Krishna, a favourite theme of Sri Ramakrishna, the latter did not like the singing. Sri Ramakrishna became somewhat abstracted. The musician failed to create a spiritual atmosphere. Later on it was found out that the singer was not a man of pure character. At Sri Ramakrishna's request Navachaitanya began to sing a *kīrtan* in full throated voice. Imbued with a spirit of detachment from the world, Navachaitanya was then living alone, devoting his time to prayer and meditation. His singing therefore created such an intense spiritual atmosphere that Sri Ramakrishna left his seat and began to dance—with indescribable charm. Immediately the singer and the other devotees began to dance around him. In no time a tangible spiritual fervour filled the surroundings. It stirred the hearts of all present. Even the dry philosopher that

Mahimacharan was, began chanting the name of Hari and dancing in the *kīrtan*.

After the music stopped Sri Ramakrishna resumed his seat, and in keeping with the mood of the assembled devotees he began to sing songs of the Divine Mother with great feeling. His eyes were turned upward. Song followed song. Intoxicated with divine love he began to dance as he sang the last one. He reeled and the devotees stood up. Sri Ramakrishna caught hold of M's hand and said, "Don't be foolish! Dance." 'M' responded and a charming spell of song and dance followed. Sri Ramakrishna finally regained his normal mood and remarked: "We have had such joy today! How much joy Hari's name creates! Is it not so?" The episode shows that Navachaitanya could satisfy with his singing a great spiritual giant like Sri Ramakrishna.⁷

Through all these recorded episodes—and some unrecorded—Navachaitanya came closer and closer to Sri Ramakrishna. He used to frequent Dakshineswar whenever he could come. One morning Navachaitanya appeared at Sri Ramakrishna's room and after a few words of greeting Sri Ramakrishna suddenly said: "Well, you have such a nice *bilwa* fruit on your tree, but you have not brought one for me." A surprised Navachaitanya made a mild protest saying that it was not the season for *bilwa* fruit. Smiling, Sri Ramakrishna refuted him. "It seems you are unaware of many things in your household. There is *bilwa* in your tree, yet you say there is none." On his return home, Navachaitanya hurried into the adjoining garden. To his utter surprise a ripe *bilwa* of big size fell on the ground and burst open in front of him. Taking up the fruit he immediately returned to Dakshineswar and placed it in front of Sri Ramakrishna who was all smile. The baffled Navachaitanya

7. *Ibid.*, p 517.

thought to himself, "Well, Sir, this is but a play of yours!"

For a long time Navachaitanya was pining for some deep spiritual experience. He thought of opening his heart before the all-powerful Master. But though he tried, hesitancy always overtook him. His mind churned with worries. Suppose, the Master refuses! Suppose, he points out my deficiencies! With a whirlpool of thought spinning in his head he went to the Master at Dakshineswar, but could not speak out. Every time, he tore back to his residence at Konnagar. When he heard that the Master had contracted some serious illness he became deeply distressed. But one day word reached him that the Master had gone to Panihati to attend the annual Vaisṇava festival held there. Immediately he rushed to Panihati, a few miles upriver from Dakshineswar on the bank of the Ganga. It was 11th June 1885. Ignoring that day the pain caused by a sore in his throat (later diagnosed as cancer), Sri Ramakrishna attended the festival with about twenty-five devotees, including Narendranath, Sarat, 'M', Manomohan and others. Sarat left us a description of what happened. Without a moment's hesitation the Master had joined with a large party of *saṅkīrtan* singers. It was afternoon. Sometimes Sri Ramakrishna was seen dancing with the stride of a lion; sometimes with the fluid movements of a fish swimming in a sea of bliss. Sometimes he was standing motionless in *samādhi*. The enthusiasm of onlookers and participants alike increased a thousandfold, seeing him; his dancing on that occasion was something extraordinary. Slowly the party of *kīrtan* and devotees moved towards Pandit Raghava's cottage.⁸ An eye witness, Sarat described the Master's dance: "When his body, overflowing with the intense joy of divine feelings, swayed to

and fro in quick steps, one seriously wondered whether it was made of any solid, physical substance at all. One felt as if waves, mountain high, rose in a sea of bliss and were going forward carrying everything before them and would merge that very moment, liquid in liquid, and vanish out of sight!"⁹ As if bewitched by the charm of music, the congregation of devotees followed the Master and joined the *kīrtan* with great enthusiasm. Many were utterly amazed to have the glimpse of the rapturous upsurge of Sri Ramakrishna's ecstasy; waves of joy struck all the sensitive minds. The Master, finally entered Pandit Raghava's shrine, paid his obeisance to the Deities and took rest for about half an hour. After the dispersal of the crowd he came back with the devotees to the boat for the return to Dakshineswar.

In the meantime, Navachaitanya arrived there searching for the Master, and finally coming to know that he was about to leave for Dakshineswar, came running in wild haste and threw himself on the ground at Sri Ramakrishna's feet, weeping bitterly. Dodging all his fears and forebodings he earnestly prayed, "Please bestow your grace on me!" Already in half-ecstasy, Sri Ramakrishna now touched him. And the touch brought a sudden change in Navachaitanya. His bitter weeping turned into unbounded delight; almost in a dazed condition he danced and sang the Master's glory and bowed down to him over and over again. This continued until he was calmed down by Sri Ramakrishna's touch on his back. Evidently he was blessed by some divine experience. The Master gave him some instruction. This experience and the Master's advice brought about a revolutionary change in Navachaitanya; he became more indrawn,

⁸. A companion of Sri Chaitanya (1486-1533 A.D.)

⁹. Swami Saradananda, *Sri Ramakrishna, The Great Master*, Trans. Swami Jagadananda, 4th edition (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, 1952) p. 824.

soaked in the love of God. Thereafter he devoted himself entirely to the practise of spiritual disciplines, doing *japa* and meditation day and night in the cottage he erected on the bank of the Ganga.

Repeated invitations of Navachaitanya and Manomohan induced Sri Ramakrishna, already stricken with terminal cancer, to visit Konnagar once again on 5th July 1885. Accompanied by Navagopal Ghosh, Mahima-charan Chakraborty, Ramchandra Dutta, Rakhal Ghosh and Tarapada. Sri Ramakrishna travelled by boat to reach 'Puratan Ghat' at Konnagar. Alighting, he rode by hackney carriage to *Haribhakti Pradāyini Sabha*, or simply called *Harisabha*, of Konnagar. Established about 120 years ago the *Harisabha* had its *Natmandira* constructed in 1869.¹⁰ It stands on the road now called Sambhu Chatterjee Street. In the shrine is regularly worshipped Shyamsundar Jeu. Reading from the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* was going on when the Master arrived. Curiously enough, Sri Ramakrishna sat with his face turned towards the Deity and his back towards the reader of the scripture.

As Sri Ramakrishna stepped out of the *Harisabha* he came across 'M' who was on his way to Navachaitanya's. Advising him to come on foot, Sri Ramakrishna, along with a few others went straight to Navachaitanya's house. There the devotee cordially received him and showed him the garden and the mango and bilwa trees. Paying his respects to Gopinath Jeu, the Master climbed to the second floor of the three-storied house and took a seat in the small six-by-eight foot room. Family members came one after another to show their respect by touching his feet. After a while Sri Ramakrishna went down to the parlour of Manomohan Mitra. It was a fairly big room, twenty by twelve feet, and was airy

and cool. Devotees from Calcutta and some local people assembled. One of them, an elderly witty man, pointed to Sri Ramakrishna and observed, "What a wonderful man! Full of joy all the time!" He came forward and said, "Well, man is really free from virtue and vice. Whatever evil a man does, he does so under the compulsion of God." Sri Ramakrishna corrected him saying, "Well, he who has really got the conviction that God is the Doer, is liberated." By way of illustration, Sri Ramakrishna then narrated the story of a monk who was beaten unconscious by a wicked landlord. On regaining consciousness he was asked by the inmates of the monastery, "Who is feeding you milk?" The monk replied, "He who beat me is now feeding me." Sri Ramakrishna exhorted that one must assimilate the meaning of the story. He wanted to drive home the point that thought of worldly objects were the real impediments on the way to God-realization.

Sri Ramakrishna further said, "Do you know what a worldly man's idea of God is like? It is like children's swearing by God when they quarrel. They have heard the word while listening to their elderly aunts quarrelling."

Continuing, he said, "*I* and *mine* are but manifestations of ignorance or *māyā*." Then drawing the pointed attention of the elderly gentleman, he said, "You better give up the 'sour-broth of hog-plum'. Happiness in worldly life is like the enjoyment of hog-plum which consists of stone and skin only. And if one eats it, one suffers from acidity." The Master further said in the course of his discussion, "He who says a hundred times 'I am a sinner'; 'I am a sinner', a sinner he becomes." Navagopal Gosh remarked, "One who fears a ghoul, truly he becomes possessed."

Sri Ramakrishna's eyes fell on Mahima-charan. He said, "Formerly you were quite

10. *The Souvenir*, Published by *Harisabha* on the occasion of its 125th anniversary.

egoistic. Hriday used to say that a realized soul does not find distinction between his *guru* and a sweeper....There are three words that prick my flesh: 'guru', 'master' and 'father'."

After taking some rest Sri Ramakrishna walked to the bank of the Ganga and took a boat at Panchu Datta's Ghat. Addressing 'M' he said, "The river is not choppy. Why not accompany us?" 'M' agreed and boarded the country boat. Mahimacharan, Navagopal, Navachaitanya, Tarapada and others also accompanied the Saint to Dakshineswar.

The boat moved along the eastern bank of the Ganga. At Ariadaha Ghat Sri Ramakrishna could see Baburam¹¹ wearing newly purchased clothing. He remarked, "Ah, he looks like a dandy!" Baburam also got into the boat.

After a while Sri Ramakrishna pointedly said, "Everyone wants to be a Master, but even to be a true disciple is quite difficult. Water cannot accumulate unless in the ground there is a low place....The three words 'guru', 'Master', 'father', prick me, as it were."

It seems Sri Ramakrishna was sitting on the top of the low covering of the boat's cabin. Evening was approaching and the sky was cloudy. At one stage, Sri Ramakrishna found his head just under the boom attached to the ship's rudder. He raised his hand over his head to protect himself from the swinging beam. He was like a joyous boy. Pointing to a bird he said, "Look, the bird is chirping, there is rumbling in the clouds too!" Sitting on the cabin top he was dangling his legs.

He told the devotees about the episode of the Mussalmān girl. He said, "The Divine Mother reveals Herself to Her devotees in different forms. She came to me one day

as a Mussalmān girl six or seven years old. She had a tilak on her forehead and was naked. She walked with me, joking and frisking like a child. As soon as Hriday came she ran away." After a while he remarked, "I wonder, how the girl put so much trust on me!"

On his return to Dakshineswar, Sri Ramakrishna went to the Kali temple and offered flowers at the feet of the Divine Mother. 'M' accompanied him. Coming back to his room he asked Tarapada to partake a little of the offering to the Mother. In fact he helped Tarapada to procure some.

While the Master was sitting on the small couch, Navachaitanya and a few others sat on the mat spread on the floor. He said, referring to the day of the festival recently held at Panihati, "That day I could touch the chest of Navaj Chaitanya!"

The Master could not touch a man who was not of pure heart. His statement indicates the lofty character of Navachaitanya.

As his eyes fell on the devotee, the Master said, "Strong liking as you have for the name of God, you will surely succeed. Hello! when will you hold the big festival?"

The Master asked about the week-long festival the Mitra family used to hold at the temple of Gopinath Jeu. The next festival was due to begin on 20th March 1886, the day of *Dolpūrṇimā*.

After a while the Master asked, "Where is that stuff—a little sour, a little sweet—that begins to fizz when you push down the cork?" It can be safely presumed that Navachaitanya got one bottle of lemonade from the nearby Alambazar market and the Master like a boy of five enjoyed the soft drink. Navachaitanya too returned home with his heart brimful of joy from the Master's company.¹²

11. Later known as Swami Premananda.

12. The day's proceedings are from the unpublished diary of 'M'.

During the summer of 1885 the Master first complained of throat pain; after that the pain went on increasing. Sometimes there were signs of its becoming aggravated. One day he had a haemorrhage in the throat. The doctors became worried; the devotees felt depressed. Despite his suffering Sri Ramakrishna continued the work of his spiritual ministration. His concern for the welfare of the devotees went on unabated. One day, probably before the haemorrhage, Navachaitanya implored the Master to pay a visit to Teorapara of Konnagar where the Mitras lived. The Master condescended and advised him saying, "You keep consecrated food offered to Gopinath and gruel of rice ready." On the appointed day Sri Ramakrishna went to Konnagar, very probably in the company of Manomohan. Since Manomohan's parlour was spacious and quite airy the Master sat there. As the Master was cautioned against ecstasies by the doctors, there could be no singing of *kīrtan*. However, people in large numbers thronged to see him and touch his feet. The Master gave them spiritual instructions. He partook of the consecrated food offered to Gopinath Jeu, rice gruel and some of the dishes specially prepared for him. On this occasion Manomohan, Navachaitanya and others were amazed to see the large quantity of food the Master took. They later realized that he must have been in an ecstatic mood.¹³ It seems on this occasion the Master visited the house of Navachaitanya too. This was the last time the Master accepted the invitation of a devotee.

During Sri Ramakrishna's eight months' stay at the Cossipore garden house, Navachaitanya used to visit him and receive his spiritual instructions. At the physician's behest he could no longer entertain him with his *kīrtans*, however. But the Master's

advice "that love of God, or devotion to God is real, all else is trash" had made a deep impression on his inner thoughts. Such inner thoughts shape one's life more than any other single force. Whether one likes it or not, one travels through life with one's inner thoughts as navigator. Such noble thoughts instilled by the Master were piloting Navachaitanya's life boat. In January 1886 he went on a pilgrimage to Gangasagar Mela and on returning he presented himself before the Master.

A spirit of renunciation gradually suffused Navachaitanya's life. Remembering the Master's advice that to meditate on God one should withdraw within oneself or retire to a secluded corner or to a forest, Navachaitanya had already handed over his family responsibilities to his two sons and plunged himself into spiritual practices. As mentioned before, he was living in a cottage erected at Panchu Dutta's ghat on the Ganga. He was wearing ochre cloth. In the beginning he used to accept food cooked and sent by his family, but afterward began to cook for himself. He spent his days singing the glories of the Lord, telling his beads, remembering the Divine *Līlā*, and so on. Once he was taken seriously ill and a physician diagnosed pneumonia. The two daughters-in-law persuaded Navachaitanya to return home. He received the doctor's treatment and as soon as he came round again went back to the cottage. Strong willed as he was he arduously pursued his religious disciplines without paying attention to bodily requirements or to the infirmities of old age.

After the Master's passing away, his monastic disciples had taken shelter in a dilapidated house at Baranagore. Filled with an ascetic spirit they devoted day and night to the practice of spiritual disciplines. Navachaitanya considered them as his very own, and would often visit them. Likewise some monks, particularly Narendranath (later

13. "Bhakta Manomohan" (Bengali), *Udbodhan*, 1351, p. 155.

Swami Vivekananda) used to cross the Ganga to meet him in his cottage at Konnagar.¹⁴ The Alambazar Math diary records that between June and November 1897 Navachaitanya came to see his monastic brothers at least four times and the monks in their turn visited Konnagar twice. On 25 November 1897 Navachaitanya in the company of Swami Advaitananda of Alambazar Math, left on a pilgrimage in the south. They passed through Raipur en route for Rameswaram. When the Ramakrishna Math was shifted to Nilambar Mukherjee's garden house at Belur and finally to its present site Navachaitanya continued to visit the monastic disciples of the Master. Perhaps his last visit to Belur Math was on 8 February 1901 when he spent some-time with Swami Vivekananda.¹⁵

About the householder devotees of the Master, like Navachaitanya, 'M' once told: "None of the Master's devotees who are living with their families are worldly people—this is what the Master himself said.¹⁶ They were, in fact, householder-ascetics, *grihastha-sannyāsis*, as described in the *Devī-Bhāgavata*. Such ascetics primarily renounce mentally and keep their mind fixed on God.

14. Mahendranath Dutta, *Śrīmat Vivekānanda Swāmijir Jīvaner Ghaṭanāvalī* (Bengali) Vol. I. 2nd. Edn. p. 202.

15. Diary of Swami Brahmananda.

16. Swami Nityatmananda, *Śrī Ma Darsan* (Bengali), Vol 9, pp. 170-71.

In Sri Ramakrishna's eyes, "This world is like the 'whirlpool of Viśalakṣī'. Once a boat gets into it, there is no hope of its rescue. Again the world is like a thorny bush; you have hardly freed yourself from one set of thorns before you find yourself entangled in another. Once you enter the labyrinth you find it very difficult to get out. Living in the world, a man becomes seared, as it were."¹⁷ To help such worldly men get out of the mess, Sri Ramakrishna placed before them a few working models. Navachaitanya was no doubt one of them.

As he made progress in his total surrender to the Lord, people could see him beaming with a sense of fulfilment. Swami Saradananda in his *magnum opus*, *Sri Ramakrishna, The Great Master*, remarked about Navachaitanya: "Many loved and respected him on seeing his devotion and blissful figure. He was thus able by the grace of the Master to awaken the love of God in the hearts of many people during the last part of his life."¹⁸ After a long and meaningful life Navachaitanya Mitra breathed his last in 1904 at his family residence where he was finally brought. Till the last moment, his life shone like a lamp illuminating the glory of Sri Ramakrishna and thus inspiring the worldly people in search of peace and harmony.

17. *The Gospel*, page 96.

18. *Sri Ramakrishna, The Great Master*, p. 827.

As a jewel covered with ashes becomes dirty, so also, scholars, heroes, humble and grateful persons lose their respective nature and become corrupted when they amass wealth.

—Sri Ramachandra

Process of Christianization of the Tribals of Chotanagpur

AMIYA BHAUMIK

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Before the advent of Christian missionaries, tribals of Bihar were under the influence of dominant elite culture. The elite ideology reflected mostly the moneyed interests of the upper classes during the 18th century colonial period. They were the capitalists, the landlords, money-lenders and political functionaries. In Bihar the feudal lords were the most powerful. They were a culturally heterogeneous group and their operations were limited to their own hegemonic cultural areas. Three elite cultures, namely *Bhojpuri*, *Mithila* and *Maghai* were most prominent. The Rajput-Bhumihar combine in Bhojpur and Maghai, and the Brahmins in Mithila represented the hegemonic cultural groups. The parts of Chotanagpur and Santhal Parganas had their distinct tribal-culture roots and were dominated by the upper castes, Rajputs and Bhumihars in particular.

The tribals had a distinct language, religion, culture and social organization. Their exploitation by the upper castes led to land-alienation, pauperization and proletarian bondage to the land. The dismal situation provided fertile ground for the missionaries and ultimately paved the way for mass conversion in Chotanagpur.¹

1. Chotanagpur was a large division in the East composing parts of Bengal and the modern Bihar. It included Medinipur, parts of Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Santhal Parganas, Gaya, Meerjapur, etc.

The advent of Christianity in Chotanagpur brought a vast change in socio-economic, socio-political and socio-religious institutions of the tribals. The establishment of churches, both of catholic and protestant denominations, progressed at a great rate, and in a matter of a few decades the whole of Chotanagpur came under their influence. The aim of this paper is to focus on the history of Christian missionary activity and their methods of conversion in the Chotanagpur area.

Gossner Evangelical Lutheran Mission

An evangelist, Father Gossner of Berlin sent four missionaries: E. Schatz, A. Brandt, F. Balsch and Th. Janke to India. But he could not advise them on any special area or field of work to enter upon in India. Therefore upon reaching Calcutta they were in a state of perplexity about it. After a few days they came across some tribal labourers who told them about Chotanagpur and its people. The missionaries felt that Chotanagpur might be an appropriate place for their evangelical work. At the same time, Captain Hannington, the then Commissioner of the Chotanagpur Division, requested the secretary of the British and Foreign Bible Society of Calcutta to send the four missionaries to Chotanagpur to preach the Gospel to its people.

On 2nd November 1844 the four missionaries arrived Ranchi. It was rather a difficult

task for them to make any immediate conversions to the new religion because of the rigid social structure of the tribals. They were a close-knit subculture. (Well has Swami Vivekananda said that if you ask any common man of the West about his religion, you may expect the reply that one has to go to church on Sundays for service, but an Indian villager, even though uneducated will often be able to tell you in some detail about his religion and some profound ideas that lie behind it.) These four ambitious missionaries initially had to work very slowly. After four years of work they wrote to Father Gossner about the difficulties they faced. In reply the Father asked them to be patient and persevering. He also mentioned that if the people did not receive the Word for their salvation, "then to preach to them their condemnation".²

In 1850 for the first time, four tribal *Oraons* came to the missionaries and wanted to see Lord Jesus, of whom they had heard so many times from them. The missionaries replied that to perceive Him one needed a strong desire and longing. The *Oraons* found it, therefore very difficult to realize Jesus. Ultimately, however, these four along with their families got themselves converted into Christianity after receiving some religious training. In 1851 two *Munda* families were also converted. In the same year the foundation for the big church in Ranchi was laid and in 1855 it was dedicated and thrown open for public use.

Achievements in the missionary evangelical work was far from satisfactory. In seven years they could convert only six families. Therefore the missionaries introduced welfare programmes to improve the socio-

economic condition of the Christian converts, along with evangelical work. It is said that in the event of court cases the Christians were helped and sometimes financially backed by the missionaries. Christianity also brought freedom to the tribals from the dread of witchcraft and sorcery, and also exemption from the customary need of sacrificing fowls and animals to the spirits. Such customs were prevailing at that time.

Chotanagpur tribals were glad of these changes and were attracted by the newcomers' utilitarian outlook, so by 1855 the number of Christian converts rose to nearly twelve hundred. Tribal Christians gradually became powerful in organized groups and grew into a quite different class of people from the non-christian tribals. In course of time they acquired the idea that to become a Christian was the best means of shaking off the oppression of the *zemindars* (landlords). This encouraged tribals to come increasingly into the fold of Christianity.

Soon the rapid spread of the new religion alarmed the *zemindars*, who naturally feared that it would check the free exercise of despotic power which they had so long enjoyed. They therefore tried their best to drive away the missionaries from the Chotanagpur area. Christianity not only brought about tension between the *zemindars* and the converts, but also divided the tribals among themselves. Neo-christians came to be regarded as social outcasts by their non-christian brethren. On the whole these tensions had a favourable effect on the Christian community as they developed a greater sense of unity and solidarity among themselves. However, at the end, the *zemindars* and non-christians prevailed over the missionaries, and in 1857 the missionaries were advised by the Government officials to leave Ranchi. Later, in their absence, church property was destroyed and looted and the Christian converts were badly persecuted.

2. Lakra, J., "The Gossner Evangelical Lutheran Church, 1845", *The Lutheran Enterprise in India*, C. H. Swavelly, Editor; Publ. The Federation of Evangelical Lutheran Churches in India, 1951, p. 51.

During that period also a bomb was thrown over the Lutheran church in Ranchi. However, the missionaries returned to Ranchi after the situation improved. The Commissioner, Mr. Dalton of Chotanagpur, became their special friend and the missionaries and missions began to flourish.³

In 1855 Father Gossner, before his death, committed the Mission to the German people who began to work under directions from the 'Home Board' at Berlin. A constitution was drawn up in 1868 but somehow it dissatisfied a section of the missionaries. Some of them, including Father Paster, Father Balsch, one of the four pioneers, and also the leader of the group, joined the *Society for the Promotion of Gossner Mission at Ranchi* (S.P.G.). New Mission branches were opened along with the opening of schools, dispensaries and other social welfare centres. The Theological College of the Lutheran Mission was established in 1874.

Gossner Mission was directly affected during the first world war in 1914 when all Germans were repatriated. The Government of the British then came to treat the missionary property as that of the enemy, but somehow the matter was reconciled. A proposal to join the S.P.G. Mission was offered by the National Missionary Council of India, but the Lutheran Christians rejected the proposal. They recommended that the Gossner Lutheran Church of Chotanagpur and Assam should be treated as an independent indigenous Church and there should be an advisory board to look after the institutional work of the Church. In July 1919 the Gossner Evangelical Lutheran Church of Chotanagpur and Assam was declared autonomous and a new constitution was formed.

After its autonomy, the Church had to face great economic distress. It underwent

great trials and tribulations due to inner frictions and disputes, but these proved to be the 'birth-pang' of the new era. In 1950, again the constitution was revised according to which a synodical system in the Church was introduced. This revision provided for several congregations and some power was delegated to the synods. The church council became a representative body made up of members from each synod. But the conflict between the tribals and Christian group persisted, and consequently an ecumenical committee was set up in 1960 to enquire into difficulties, settle internal disputes, and devise some other lasting remedies. The constitution was completely overhauled according to which the whole Church was divided into four Zones and the head of each Zone was to become alternatively the *Pramukh*, equivalent to the President of the Church, for the term of three years. It was considered to be an event of great significance in the history of the Church, designed to eliminate all the internal differences and conflicts. The present figure of the Lutheran converts in Chotanagpur is nearly 80,500.

Roman Catholic Mission

The history of the Roman Catholic Mission in Chotanagpur is closely associated with the name of Father Constant Lievens who was regarded as its greatest missionary in India. It was only with the coming of Father Lievens that conversion on a large scale began. But the missionary movement had started much earlier, when a priest from Calcutta had come to Dorauda to minister to the Christians of Madras Regiment stationed there. In 1869 the Archbishop of Calcutta asked Father Stockman to open a branch at Chaibasa (near Jamshedpur) in Chotanagpur. He was warmly welcomed there by a residential Magistrate. The Magistrate in his hearty letter of welcome to the Father said that he felt sure that the race

3. *Ibid.*, p, 55.

he loved so well would be converted without any difficulty. Contrary to his hope, however, the Father could not make much headway in the work of conversions. During the first five years he was able to convert only six families.

In 1885 Father Lievens came to Jamgain near Torpa in Ranchi. He soon learnt the local language and sincerely started observing the social and cultural customs of the people. He compiled a catechism in Hindi and composed hymns for his parishioners which were set to foreign tunes. Such was the rapid progress of the Father that within just six months he was given independent charge of a vast mission.

Police officials were very much helpful in his endeavour. They used to provide information regarding tribal customs, their problems, and the injustices the tribals suffered at the hands of vigilantes and *zemindars*. Accordingly, the Father took up their cases and plunged himself into the defence of tribal interests, especially in agrarian and tenant law cases. Bowen wrote: "The Father became one of the greatest Justices in India, and even English judges would refer intricate questions to him and defer to his decisions."⁴ Soon the Father declared to the tribals that he had come not only for the eternal welfare of people's souls, but also to help them in their temporal benefits. Tribals used to come to him with their problems, in which the Father took interest, brought a few cases to the court of Ranchi, and won them. The downtrodden peasants began to realize that they had at last found a defender who was more than an equal of the unscrupulous landlords. The number of Christians then increased day-by-day. The missionaries asked the tribals to render only

customary service to the *zemindars* and to resist exorbitant demands, if made. All these gave rise to big disputes and conflicts between the missionaries, the *zemindars* and non-converted tribals, called 'pagans'. However, the Father never annoyed the British Government. All along he was on very good terms with the officials.

Among converts, Lutheran Christians were the largest in number. Owing to this, Father Lievens had to face opposition and embarrassment from the Lutheran pastors. He was called 'the missionary of the devil'. Then he was reluctant to provide any help to the 'pagans'. Rather he would tell them clearly that he would help only the Christians. Considering the material benefits which Christian converts were enjoying many a non-christian felt attracted to Christianity. To the Father they promised that they would stop any worship or sacrifice to spirits, abstain from work on Sunday, and act according to his advice.

Methods employed in conversions have evoked some controversy, providing a point of attack on the Christian missionaries in general. Missionaries have been generally accused of converting the illiterate aborigines through fraud or temptation of monetary and other gains.

Legal Support and Material Inducements

Giving relief and legal advice to the aborigines being exploited by the landlords, winning their cases in court, exercising all possible influence for the protection of the Christians, and introducing numerous welfare programmes in education and in economic and medical fields were the most common methods of conversion. In fact the large number of tribals accepted Christianity because of socio-economic benefits, and not for the spiritual life. In conversion, Father Lievens was more successful than the earlier

4. Bowen, F. J., *Father Constant Lievens*, S. J. (St. Louis: M.O.B. Herder Book Co., 1936) p. 65.

four Lutheran missionaries and the Roman Catholic missionary Father Stockman. He was the first who introduced social welfare programmes. It appears all their efforts emerged from a policy motivated to expand Christianity.

One notorious method of bringing in converts was coercion. It was mainly adopted by the Roman Catholic sect. Grimley and Renny's official documents (1889-1890, pp. 136-46) provide this information. Several landlords and police complained to the higher executive authorities against the aboriginal Christians who would convert others by forcibly cutting the top knots of their hair and threatening them with damage to crops. Sometimes authorities used to take action against them. Once a *chaprasi* (local servant) of Father Lievens was also involved in this kind of act and was duly punished by the authorities. Sometimes the Christians would also take weapons with them and the records show that they had clashes even with the police. These disturbances had the tacit approval of missionaries. Renny had condemned the action of the Jesuit priests in very strong language charging them with encouraging the discontent and laying at their doors the responsibility for disturbances.

Bluff and Deception

In some cases, bluff and deception was employed to win converts. Renny, in his official documents, pointed out that Father Lievens used to move from village to village as an official of the *Mchārānī* (Queen Empress). During his visits he used to announce that he was ordered by the *Mahārānī* to inform the people that if they became Christians they would not be subjected to excessive exaction. A number of innocent people were convinced by such promises and adopted Christianity. But soon people rea-

lized that they had been deceived by Father Lievens.

Social and Charitable Work

The opening of schools, dispensaries and hospitals, orphanages, maternity centres, vocational institutions, cooperative societies and other social agencies were the method usually adopted in Christian conversion. Among these, missionaries laid the greatest importance on education. They knew well that primarily through education they could draw more and more people into their fold, and they actually did so.

Hallet, in his documents (1917, p. 230-40), noted that apart from a high school in Ranchi named St. John's High School, the Catholic Mission had not less than five hundred boys' schools in different parts of Chotanagpur in the early decades of the present century. To obtain better teachers for their numerous schools the Catholic Mission opened a Training School exclusively reserved for aboriginals. In 1890 the Catholic Girls' School, later named Ursuline Convent, was opened in Ranchi. Now a Lace School is attached with this Convent in which two hundred women are working. Later, another high school for boys, named Alousis High School, was opened, and St. Xavier's College and St. Xavier's Institute of Social Work in Ranchi were started in 1945 and 1955 respectively.

To impart training in carpentry and masonry, an industrial school was opened in 1894. A similar school was started to give training in weaving and dying, carpentry, iron-work and silk-worm rearing. In 1909 Father Hoffman established the Chotanagpur Catholic Cooperative Credit Society.

Lutherans were the first to open a primary school, which was named the Gossner High

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Ethical and Moral Values in Education

PROF. K. RAMA RAO

Still adequate attention is not being given to instill our younger generation with the sound moral and spiritual values. Professor Rama Rao indicates that this is cause for concern. He offers encouragement and hope to educators and presents discussion of not only current theory but content and methodology too, in what is termed "Value Education". Prof. Rama Rao is the author of much appreciated "Moral Education—a Practical Approach", and is Principal of the B. Ed. College at Ramakrishna Institute of Moral and Spiritual Education in Mysore.

What is a value and what is its relationship to education? If education is intended for the realization of values, how should it be shaped? These form the material for this essay.

Intrinsic and Instrumental Values

Things worthy of possession are of value. Materials such as property, money, food, shelter, air and water are of value to all. Human qualities such as honesty, truth-speaking, love, peace and kindness are also of value to all. When something acts as a means to an end it is said to be of 'instrumental value', e.g. food, money, and such other things. When a value is its own end it is called of 'intrinsic value', e.g. good-will, *dharma*, unselfish acts. And some values can function both as intrinsic and instrumental. In general, material values are mostly instrumental, and human and ethical values, intrinsic. Education should emphasize the development of the intrinsic values.

Ethical and Moral Values in India

Ethics is the science of morality. It lays down the theory or principles for moral behaviour. Ethics and morality are analogous to science and applied science. Ethics owes its origin to (secular) philosophy and/or religion. Ethics grew in India following the

tenets and teachings of the *Vedas* and *Smṛtis*. The latter are themselves simplified forms of the *Vedas* and meant for everyday life. We have many *Smṛtis*, such as those of Manu, Yājñavalkya, Prasastapāda, and many others. Each one of these lays down certain obligatory duties for all people. (*Manusmṛti* lays down ten obligatory duties, *Yājñavalkyasmṛti* lays down nine, and *Prasastapādasmṛti* mentions twelve.) Changes in social life demand changes in certain aspects of human conduct and values. So new *Smṛtis* are created. Nowadays we can conceive of a *Gāndhi-smṛti* also, which lays down eleven duties for all people. They are: *Satya* (truthfulness), *Ahimsā* (non-injury to others), *Asteya* (non-stealing), *Brahmacharya* (continence), *Śarīrśrama* (physical labour), *Aswāda* (discrimination about quantity and quality of food), *Sarvatra-bhaya varjanam*, respect for all religion, *Swadeśi* (love of indigenous goods), and removal of untouchability.

In ancient India, ethical values were formulated not merely for leading a worthy life here, but also for entering a future or transcendental life. Four important personal values, namely: *Dharma*, *Artha*, *Kāma* and *Mokṣa* are prescribed in the *Vedas*. Through experience and enjoyment of these legitimate pleasures of life one is expected to go beyond them to experience *Mokṣa* or spiritual

illumination. The material values *Artha* and *Kāma* are to be governed by a righteous life based on *Dharma*. These should serve as instrumental values for achieving *Mokṣa*—liberation from the cycle of rebirths. However, the Prabhākara school of *Mīmāṃsā* Philosophy (which declares no necessity for a faith in the existence of God) says *Dharma* is its own end, and is therefore an intrinsic value also. It may be noted that Philosophy speculates on the goals of life, nature of the universe, nature of man, etc., and conflicts among ethical systems may arise when values are based on different philosophies.

In India religion prescribes the way of life. Both religion and philosophy are based on the same source, viz, the *Vedas* and the *Upaniṣads*, and so there can be no conflict in *Dharma* or ethical values. But what is *Dharma*? *Dharma* lays down duties for individuals, sectors of society, and even for rulers. As such, all duties are meant for the good of individuals and also of the universe. *Dharma* has to support the universe. That is one of its definitions. What is *Dharma* in a given context is therefore to be decided by reason, if it is not already laid down in the *Śrūti* (*Vedas*) or *Smṛti*, or accepted and widely approved by society. *Dharma* is therefore dynamic ethical value.

Any consideration of value education must not lose sight of the fact that the national character of India is '*Dharma*', the etymological meaning of which is 'to hold together'—*Dhāraṇāt dharmah ityāhuḥ*. Religion in practice (*Yoga*) also means 'to unite' and both religion and *Dharma* meant the same thing to our ancestors. We will return to this point when we think of the goals in "*Education in Values*" following.

Ethical Values in the West

In the West the origin of philosophy was purely secular, and the ancient Greeks

prescribed three universal and eternal values for human life. These are: the *good*, the *right*, and the *ought*. They are concerned with human actions. That action which aims at the good of all is a right action. A *good* person is one who is benevolent and *good* in an action lies not in itself, nor even in its results, but in volition. (As Kant says, "There is nothing really good in this world or outside of it except the 'good-will'.") A *right* action, to be right, should be objectively right. Its objectivity can be increased by the doer, the agent, by putting himself in the place of all those concerned with the action, and judging its *pros* and *cons* from their point of view. Such deliberation may not result in a hundred percent objectivity, but it can reduce the subjectivity of the judgement. Human actions are sometimes governed by 'a must' if done in obedience to an external authority. But if actions are carried out in obedience to the agent's own free will they are governed by '*ought*'. '*Ought*' actions have a superior moral value since they are inspired from within.

That the single word *Dharma* covers the meaning of all the three foregoing ethical principles of the West is easily understood because *Dharma*:

- (a) Questions the right or wrong of an action—(*The right*)
- (b) Prescribes to do deeds of *Dharma*—(*the good*)
- (c) Demands deliberation before acting—(*the ought*)

Having established the identity between *Dharma* and the three Western principles of ethics, it may be added that all these are to a great extent eternal and universal in their application. Commenting on the nature of ethical laws MacKenzie says, "The particular rules may vary with different conditions of life ; but the broad principles always remain the same and are applicable not only to all kinds of men but to all rational

beings." It should be the endeavour of all concerned to formulate such ethical and moral values in education.

Three Impersonal (Spiritual) Values

Besides the four personal values, viz. *Dharma*, *Artha*, *Kāma* and *Mokṣa*, already mentioned, India has offered in addition three impersonal values also to all human beings. These are Truth (*Satyam*) Love (*Sivam*), and Beauty (*Sundaram*). These are also believed to be the attributes of the 'Supreme Power', the Lord of the Universe, or of the individual 'Pure-Self'. One is expected to seek these values through one's every thought, word and deed. *Dharma* as an instrumental value must strive for these values. What is *Dharma* for a worldly life may change from time to time. But *Dharma* for a spiritual or transcendental life remains always the same—it is universal and eternal. Acquiring the impersonal spiritual values is also *Dharma* in its intrinsic sense.

Reflective Morality vs. Tribal Morality

Why should *Dharma* modify itself to suit life? This is because society is not static; it changes its way of functioning, its material goals and attitudes to life. Society changes as a result of education, political vicissitudes, advances in science and technology and other factors. In India we have witnessed changed attitudes of people of late towards child marriage, satī, widow remarriage, untouchability, exploitation of child labour, and other issues. If old moral laws are not modified or replaced by new adaptations in any society, either they become backward, degenerate, or even die out. Hence the ethical values should always remain dynamic. How is this dynamism achieved?

Moral laws are transmitted in any society from generation to generation through customs. Observation of moral values help to keep the unity of the group or the tribe.

Violations of these are opposed by the group because of the fear that the harmony of the whole will be disturbed. So custom-based moral laws are zealously guarded. However, thinking and rational individuals in every society from time to time realize the shortcomings of certain outmoded moral laws and boldly suggest by their words or their actions either to reject those outmoded values or modify them. Society in the beginning refuses to listen to well-meaning reformists, but ultimately sees the light and finds justification for modifying or rejecting certain of them and changes its life pattern. Says Norman J. Bull: "Moral progress means the morality followed by individuals who went against the accepted morality of their day and suffered for doing so." This is how reflective morality is born. Individuals capable of reflective morality are very few. But examples are there in every country. To mention a few: Bhagavan Buddha, Socrates, Abraham Lincoln, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Swami Vivekananda, Mahatma Gandhi, Maharshi Karve and Sri Narayanaguru.

Emergence of some NEW VALUES all over the world

As a result of scientific and technological advancements and due to the emergence of new philosophies, many new values have emerged in the present century. Some of these concern world peace, international brotherhood, human rights and rights of women and children, maintenance of pure food, water, air and medicine, protection of the environment—air, rivers, lakes and seas, and ecological balance. Besides there are in different parts of the world new emphasis on the democratic spirit, on liberty, on humanism, non-violent solutions to world problems, and the power of *Satyāgraha*.

Any education in ethical values cannot ignore any of the above strongly felt values of people all over the world.

Religion vs. Ethical Values

Religion is derived from the Latin *religare*—‘to bind together’. It is only *Dharma* or ethical values that can bring unity, peace and happiness to all people. It is unfortunate that sometimes religion divides people and makes them fight. Religion has two aspects: (1) ethnic—which forms due to the particular customs, traditions and social laws that prevail where the particular religion arose, and (2) the spiritual—which is universal and eternal, and concerns the indwelling Spirit in all beings. Religion understood in the latter sense, as it should be, is only spirituality and cannot be the cause for any struggle between people professing their different religious faiths. Swami Vivekananda said: “Take away religion from society; what remains is a forest of brutes.” He also said, “Religion is like a milch cow; it sometimes gives kicks.” So neither ethnic nor spiritual religion can be ignored when we consider values and value education.

Education in ethical values can be considered of two types: (a) education in secular values—free from religious ideas of ethnic origin, and (b) education in secular ethical values supplemented by ideas from religion which have helped unite humankind into one family of man.

Dr. K. V. Puttappa, the well known poet and educator of Karnataka, advocates that the goal of all education should be towards preparing the *Viśwa-mānava*, the ‘universal man’, and the attainment of global consciousness. He has suggested five *mantras* as the goals: (1) *Manujamata*—a universal human religion, (2) *Viśwa-patha*—a universal path, (3) *Sarvodayā*—the good of all, (4) *Samanvaya*—harmony, and (5) *Pūrṇa-dr̥ṣṭi*—integral vision. By these he envisages the annihilation of all ethnic and religious barriers between man and man, such as those of caste, pride of community, colour creed and so on. He also advises that every

one should try to become spiritual by studying the scriptures of as many religions as possible—instead of institutionalizing the spiritual ideas and teachings of the great religious Masters. Religions should be individualized, so that there will be as many paths as there are individuals, if need be. This was the great idea of religious freedom propounded by Swami Vivekananda.

Education in Spiritual Values Identical to All Religions

There is much evidence to establish that all religions speak the same truth. Among several such examples just one we offer here:

On the Nature of Self/God

(a) The Self (Ātman) is not *this*; nor is it the *other*.—*Bṛhad-āraṇyaka Upaniṣad*

(b) God Almighty revealed to me that I was neither *that* nor *this*.—*Abusaidibu Abikhyar*

(c) We cannot know what God is, but rather what He is not.—*St. Thomas Aquinas*

(d) The one sound ‘OM’ is Brahman.—*The Bhagavad Gītā*

(e) Hallowed be Thy (God’s) name.—*St. Matthew*

(f) The noblest speech is the invocation of Allah.—*Quran*

Hence teaching about spirituality, or the essence of all religions, supplements ethical values.

The Nature of the Child’s Moral Development

No moral education of the youth can be achieved effectively without some basic knowledge of the nature of the child’s moral development by those concerned—parents, teachers and others. That moral development is not innate and that it demands education and training is very clear from experience. The following couplet emphasises the idea:

*No moral man was made so in a day ;
Nor was any born moral.*

Unlike physical and intellectual development which slows down or ceases after attaining a certain age, moral development can continue through one's lifetime. During the course of moral development a child is found to pass through four important stages, schematized below by psychologists and educationists:

- (a) Anomy (0-4 yrs.)—an amoral stage
- (b) Heteronomy (4 to 9 yrs.)—a stage of external control by parents, teachers, and others through rewards/punishments.

External Controls

'I must' ... is replaced by ...
The sense of fear/shame ... is replaced by ...
To honour convention ... is replaced by ...
The voice of public opinion ... is replaced by

- (c) Socionomy (9 to 13 yrs.)—a stage of external-internal control by society through praise or blame.

- (d) Autonomy (13 to 17 yrs.)—a stage of internal control by the self—capable of making morally right decisions on one's own ability.

The above stages are not like water-tight compartments. Any stage may overlap with its subsequent stage. So they may perhaps better be called phases. In the end the child has a fully developed moral consciousness or conscience. The important change that took place in the child was replacement of external controls by corresponding internal ones. This is nicely illustrated by Norman J. Bull:

Internal Controls

'I ought'
sense of guilt or self-respect
to honour conviction
the inner voice or conscience
(To be Concluded)

PROCESS OF CHRISTIANIZATION OF THE TRIBALS

(Continued from page 229)

School in 1895 when it was upgraded to include class ten. Similarly, a girls' school, opened in 1915, was expanded to include class ten in 1941 and renamed the Beth Sada Girls' High School. In 1917 the Girls' Primary Teachers' Training School was attached to the old primary school and in 1987 the Beth Sada School was upgraded to B. Ed. The Gossner College in Ranchi was established in 1971.

Instilling a Sense of Inferiority Complex

This was another method through which tribals were Christianised. The missionaries used to impress upon them that their religion was inferior, and that it could not save them from going to hell. This 'sense of inferiority', and 'fear of condemnation' gradually led

the tribals to believe that their own religion and social conditions were really inferior. Naturally they felt an urge to abandon their old values and embrace Christian values.

To sum up, it appears that the Christian missionaries often went beyond the bounds of practising pure religion, or religion for its own sake. Though they started different welfare programmes for the tribals, it was often lacking sufficient altruistic motivation and attitude, except for converting poor people into Christianity.

The missionary motive in conversion of tribal people, not being based solely on spiritual motive, in the present days most of the tribals are seeking to withdraw themselves from the Christian fold to go back to their distinctive cultural heritage.

Lingasarira (The Subtle Body)

DR. DILIPKUMAR MOHANTA

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The problem of soul is as old as humanity itself. In ancient philosophy, most of the outstanding philosophers and saints regarded the inadequate knowledge of the soul as the cause of the sufferings of mankind. In the religio-philosophical culture of the Hindus, in addition to soul, the discussion about body occupies a place of special importance. The Hindus do not ignore the synthetic and integral outlook on life, or man's place in the universe as a whole. In Philosophy the soul is known as the pivot around which everything moves; the body is described as the abode of enjoyment. Body is the locus of the senses which are the means (*Vyūñjakas*) of the soul's getting various types of knowledge and experiences, pleasure, pain, etc. Hindu Philosophy mentions three types of bodies. These are the gross body (*Sthūla-śarīra*), the causal body (*Kāraṇa-śarīra*), and the subtle body (*Sūkṣma-śarīra*). Leaving aside subtle polemics of the differences and considering the combined function of these bodies with reference to the idea of rebirth, we may discuss the latter two conflated into one. We shall designate it 'the subtle body'. It is also called *Līṅgaśarīra*—"*Layam gacchati iti liṅgam*," since it will disappear in the long run, i.e. at liberation. The idea of *Līṅgaśarīra* represents a remarkably coherent picture of the evolution of the soul and it is the *Līṅgaśarīra* through which the Hindus analyse the passage of the soul from one world to another. The main purpose of our discussion will be to give an account of the general idea of this subtle body or *Līṅgaśarīra* which survives the death and

decomposition of the human physical body, as it is dealt with in Hinduism's scientific and religious-philosophical literature.

The Carakasamhitā View

The *Carakasamhitā* states that the gross body (*Sthūla-śarīra*), visible to our senses, is composed of gross physical components. It is said to be derived from the six components of parent bodies. It is born, grows and dies. The six elements are skin (*tvak*), muscles (*māmsa*), blood (*rakta*), nerves (*snāyu*), bone (*asthi*) and marrow (*majjā*). The first three of these we get from the mother and the rest comes from the father. Semen is constituted from the gross components of the five subtle elements—in equal proportion, subtle earth, subtle water, subtle fire, and ether i.e. *ākāśa*. The last, the *ākāśa*, is all-pervading subtle matter from which is derived during the course of evolution the gross *ākāśa* (or ether) and the other gross elements composing all the gross matter of the universe. The gross body exists for a time and finally perishes at death, but the *Līṅgaśarīra* with the *Antahkaraṇa*—the mind, intellect and ego (*manas, citta, buddhi* and *ahamkāra*) survives death and connects the present life with the future one. The Hindu sages held that the individual soul (*Jīvātmā*) inhering in this *Līṅgaśarīra* transmigrates from the gross body at death to another new gross body at the time of rebirth. This transmigration of the individual soul is sometimes not immediate, since there is an intermediate phase before rebirth when the soul enjoys or suffers the fruits of the

actions of the previous earthly life. So Hindus believe in the existence of previous lives, in an after life and in future rebirths. It is with the *Līṅgaśarīra* or subtle body that the individual soul retains association till it is liberated. In the meantime it sustains the individual soul in the invisible worlds. Swami Abhedananda in his *Life Beyond Death* (p. 61) thus describes the *Līṅgaśarīra* as the 'nucleus' of life. It contains all the *karmic* dispositions of past lives, along with sense and motor organs in their subtle forms. The impressions it contains of the present and past lives (*Samskāras*) are said to be the 'seed' containing all the potentialities of the future.

The Gītā's View

The *Gītā*, which forms a vital and philosophically important part of the great epic *Mahābhārata*, states that on the eve of death the individual soul contracts all its energies and centres these into the subtle body. Our ordinary sight is incapable of perceiving it. How the individual soul inhering in the *Līṅgaśarīra* enjoys the consequences of its deeds from one birth to another can only be perceived by the Yogis with their extraordinary cognitive insight.¹ The subtle body accompanies the soul in its wanderings through cosmic existence.² It is a prevalent custom among the Hindus that at the time of death the name of Lord Krishna and the teachings of the *Gītā* should be recited. They believe that listening to these the dying person experiences mental and spiritual uplift (*devabhāva*) which helps determining to a great extent his destiny in the next birth. It cannot be denied that will-power plays a significant role in our daily efforts. The teachings of the *Gītā* go a step further and declare that the desire that is very strong in

this life persists beyond death, and in accordance with this the *Līṅgaśarīra* of the individual is greatly affected, made as it is of the very material of mind and intellect. Thus, the importance of the dying person's thoughts. The saying is, "What we think we become."³ In the course of cosmic evolution, according to the *Gītā*, our past thoughts have determined our present birth and our present ones will determine the future.

The Vedantic View

In spite of some differences in terminology there is general agreement among the Hindu philosophers on the composition and function of the *Līṅgaśarīra*. We may summarize these under the head of the Vedānta as it is generally accepted as the most developed and analytical cosmology. According to Vedānta philosophy, the *Līṅgaśarīra* is composed of seventeen subtle components. These are the mind (*Manas*), the cognitional intellect (*Buddhi*), the five sense organs and the five motor organs. These are all its subtle invisible components and are activated by the five vital forces: *Prāṇa*, *Apāna*, *Samāna*, *Udāna* and *Vyāna*. Sri Sankaracharya in *Ātmabodha* (verse 12) states that the subtle body, consisting of the five vital forces, the intellect, and the ten organs, is produced from the simple elements and is the means of [the soul's] experiencing the results of [its] actions.⁴ As neither the cognitional intellect nor the mind nor even the organs—either sensory or motor, nor the five vital forces are perceptible by the ordinary eyes, the body composed of these is described as supersensible.

The Sāṃkhya View

Iśvarakṛṣṇa, in his *Sāṃkhya-Kārikā* also states that the subtle body is the combina-

1. *Bhagavad-Gītā*: 15.10.

2. *Ibid.*, 15.8.

3. *Ibid.*, 8.6.

4. As quoted in *Vedānta Paribhasa*, Tr. Swami Madhavananda, 1972. p. 164.

tion of *buddhi* (intellect), *ahamkāra* (ego), the eleven sense and motor organs, the five *tanmātrās* (subtle elements). It is an admitted fact that neither the intellect nor the ego nor even the different senses can function without the support of the subtle body.⁵ The *Sāṃkhyatattvakaumudī*⁶ also states that all the dispositions of the present life reside in the intellect. But where does the intellect itself reside? Along with the senses, it cannot exist without a supporting body in the interval between death and next birth. According to the *Sāṃkhya* philosophers, the *Lingaśarīra* occupies the position of this support.⁷

Concluding Remarks

The *Sāṃkhya* view is not fundamentally different from that of the Caraka or the Vedānta. "All the cosmic elements of the *Sāṃkhya* can be found in the *Gītā* also and the evolution series is the same."⁸ It may

also be said that all the above views, constituting a major part of Hindu cosmology, recognize the role of the *Lingaśarīra* in more or less similar ways, despite obvious slight differences. All the *karmic* dispositions (*Samskāras* or subtle impressions on the mind-stuff) inhering in the *Lingaśarīra* at death transcend the gross body of the present life and again connect themselves with the gross body in the future birth. Due to Ignorance (*Avidyā*) the *Jīva* (the *Ātman*) occupies different gross bodies in birth after birth and leaves these one by one till it attains liberation. Since it is a material body, *Lingaśarīra* is finite and changeable. It transcends our spatio-temporal order. It also reminds us that "the aim of philosophical wisdom in India is not merely the satisfaction of intellectual curiosity, but mainly an enlightened life led with far-sight, foresight and insight."⁹ As a matter of fact, the line of demarcation between philosophy and religion in India is so thin that very often one influences the other. The role of the subtle body gives a consistent picture of rebirth and the *Doctrine of Karma*.

5. *Sāṃkhya-Kārikā*, 40.

6. See *Sāṃkhyatattvakaumudī*, Verses 29, 41, 44, in the *Sāṃkhya-Kārikā* ed. by Purnachandra Vedantachanchu-Sankhyabhusana, Sahityacharya (Publishers: West Bengal State Book Board, 1983) pp. 190-200.

7. *Sāṃkhya-Kārikā*, 41.

8. Dr. Nirmala Devi, "Concept of Nature in the Bhagavad Gita", *Prabuddha Bharata*: February, 1987.

9. S. C. Chatterjee & D.M. Datta, *An Introduction to Indian Philosophy* (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1968) p. 12.

The caste system can be removed by one means only, and that is the love of God. Lovers of God do not belong to any caste. The mind, body, and soul of a man become purified through divine love. Through bhakti (love) an untouchable becomes pure and elevated.

—Sri Ramakrishna

REVIEWS & NOTICES

THE METHOD OF THE VEDANTA, by Sri Swami Satchidanandendra Sarasvati. Translated from the Sanskrit by A. J. Alston. Kegan Paul International, P.O. Box 256, WC1B 3SW London. 975 pages.

Swami Satchidanandendra Sarasvati, founder of *Adhyatma Prakasha Karyalaya*, Holenarsipur (Karnataka), was a seeker and scholar in the true Indian tradition, working quietly without seeking any recognition. His contemporaries remember how he wrote in three languages; Sanskrit, Kannada and English, and authored more than a hundred and eighty works of classical quality. The present work is a scholarly translation of his *Vedānta Prakriyā Pratyabhijñā*, published in the author's eighty-fourth year. Swamiji was concerned at the deviations from what he considered to be the authentic Advaita tradition. To establish the true tradition dating from pre-Shankara days, and to point out the major departures at the hands of various scholars—both before and after Shankara—the writer has researched innumerable works—published and unpublished—and produced what is rightly described as a critical history of the Advaita *paramaparā*.

The central argument is that the various attributes to the Self found in the *Upaniṣads* "are only imagined for purposes of instruction" and are later retracted, leaving the Self pure and absolute. We are told that things are ascribed to the Self in order to suit varying intelligences, for purposes of understanding. Examining the different texts of the *Upaniṣads*, *Gītā* and the *Brahma Sūtras*, the author seeks to affirm that "the method of false attribution followed by retraction underlies" the Vedanta teaching.

After a detailed survey of the Vedantic content—the *Upaniṣads*, *Gītā* and the *Brahma Sūtras*, the scrutiny starts with the *Kārikās* of Gaudapāda, take up the system of Bhartṛprapancha, the contribution of Mandana (whose identity is pointed out to be separate from Sureshvara's), whose influence is strong to this day on Advaita exegeses; Sureshvara's exposition, the thought of *Pancapādikā*, the emphasis on 'Difference in Identity' by the Bhāskara school; the reply of the Bhāmati school to

Bhāskara; *Iṣṭasiddhi* of Vimuktātman, which focusses on the Power of Ignorance as the material cause of the world; Vivaraṇa commentary on *Pancapādikā*; the eclectic nature of the work of Ānandabodha; Harsha's refutation of the logician; the effort of Chitsukha to reconcile the differences among the several approaches to the truth of Advaita; Sarvajñātman, who "maintained that the whole phenomenal universe of variety is created by the Ignorance of one soul, because he believed that the profoundest state of Vedanta was that in which it taught that there was only one Ignorance and only one soul." (p. 941).

The discussion is thorough, meticulous in its analysis and sincere in accepting the *bona fides* of each expositor, even while contradicting the suppositions. This is a model work, authentic, chaste in expression and noble in aim. The translator has done ample justice to this intricate text in high-flowing Sanskrit. An outstanding service to the continuation of the pristine tradition of Indian learning.

Sri M. P. Pandit
Pondicherry

COMMENTARIES ON THE DHAMMAPADA: By The Mother. Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram. 1989, pp. 118, Rs 12/-.

The Buddha's path to salvation is epitomised in the pithy verses of the *Dhammapada*. The main idea that emerges is that self-control and mental discipline are essential for spiritual development. The four stages of mental development, according to the Mother, are to *observe*, to *watch over*, to *control*, and to *master*. She, therefore, considers meditation as an indispensable factor of spiritual progress. Spiritual serenity lies in 'withdrawal', 'concentration', and 'a liberation from all cares'.

Every commentary sparkles with the Mother's profound understanding of the complex philosophical truths of the *Dhammapada*. The interpretations are coherent and immensely appealing. Sometimes, the Mother's interpretation is laced with her own personal observations. On page 25 she says, 'When I read these ancient

texts, I really have the impression that from the inner point of view, from the point of view of true life, we have fallen back....'

The commentaries are marked by incisive practical judgements. Take for example, the text that it is by the extinction of all desire that one attains true bliss. The Mother remarks that it may take a lifetime to get rid of all desires. The Mother admits that is a negative way of instilling moral discipline since desires at all levels (the mental, emotional and physical) have to be removed. Even then, there are far more subtle, dangerous and overpowering desires that cloak themselves in the guise of such a saintly appearance that one dare not call them desires at all. Even then, when all these desires have been vanquished, only the negative aspect of the spiritual task has been done. The Buddha states that when one is free from all desires, one enters into a state of infinite bliss. But the Mother observes that 'This bliss may be a little dry, and anyway it does not seem to me the quickest way.' (page 88) The quickest way is to confront the problem boldly and courageously and surrender to the Supreme Reality. The ego disappears and one merges joyfully into the splendour of the Supreme.

The Mother's commentaries are marked by a deep sincerity and a firm conviction in the potential goodness that resides in the heart of every individual. The cogent and lucid expositions ably aid in the realisation of this spiritual goal. For the best way to escape 'from the ignorance and falsehood and pain' in which one lives is through the process of mental discipline.

Dr. Rama Nair
Osmania University Hyderabad.

THE SUPRAMENTAL MANIFESTATION AND OTHER WRITINGS—SRI AUROBINDO. Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry 652-002. pp. 530, Rs 75/-.

This sizable volume contains Sri Aurobindo's deeply meditated thoughts, mainly on (1) Supramental Manifestation upon Earth, and (2) The Problem of Rebirth. There are other shorter articles on a variety of subjects dealing with *Yoga*, *The Superman*, and *Evolution*. A smaller section of *Views*

and *Reviews* is also there. All these subjects are dear to those who hanker for the knowledge of Indian culture. Some of these articles were published earlier, in book form, some fifty years ago, and the others appeared in *Arya*, the Organ of the Ashram. But still they are new and fresh to a majority of elders of the present generation and thus the coming of this volume is a welcome event.

The publishers in their note mention that "the contents of the volume have been ordered to follow strictly the arrangement of the material as it was issued by Sri Aurobindo during his lifetime." The book thus unfolds itself most naturally before the readers.

The first section, The Supernatural Manifestation upon Earth, consists of seven essays on the human body as it is and as it should be perceived. The common man views the body as some gross material, of which he is the possessor. Sri Aurobindo here, analyses the body in all its subtle forms and conjures before us a perfected body with a perfected mind within. The Evolution of Supermind is also elaborately explained in this section.

The second section running over 400 pages consists of miscellaneous writings from *Arya* during the years 1914 to 1927. Here, the writing about "The Problem of Rebirth" comes first. The theories of Karma and Rebirth stand expounded in a most rational way. All possible questions stand answered. Apart from these main themes Sri Aurobindo's short articles are culled under the headings: "Ideal and Progress", "The Superman", and "Evolution". The "Views Reviews" and a few casual notes from *Arya*—one regarding Yoga—all add to an interesting and thought provoking reading. These are spontaneous writings of Sri Aurobindo recording his responses to books and articles which came across the table of the editor of *Arya*.

Sages and Seers are the salt of the Earth. Their thoughts blow over the land like a vernal breeze. The trees blossom and so do men who have seeds of good thoughts within them. Many articles of this volume are of lasting value. Readers may read them again and again and gain strength of the spirit.

Dr. Narendranath B. Patil

PRACTICAL SPIRITUALITY

OF THE GOOD PEACEABLE MAN

First keep yourself in peace and then you will be able to bring others to peace. The peaceable man does more good than one who is very learned. The passionate man turns even good to evil, and readily believes evil. The good peaceable man turns all things to good.

He who is in perfect peace suspects no man. But he who is discontented and disturbed is agitated by various suspicions ; he neither has rest himself, nor does he permit others to rest. Many times he says that which he should not say, and leaves undone that which it were best for him to do. He considers what others ought to do, and neglects that which he is bound to do himself. Have, therefore, a zeal in the first place over yourself, and then may you justly exercise zeal toward your neighbour.

You know well how to excuse and gloss over your own deeds, but you will not accept the excuses of others. It were more just for you to accuse yourself, and to excuse your brother. If you wish to be borne with, bear also with others. See how far you still are from true charity and humility, which knows not how to feel anger or indignation against anyone but oneself.

It is easy to converse with the good and the meek, for this is naturally pleasing to all. And everyone prefers to live in peace with those who agree with him and love him the best. But to know how to live peacefully with those who are stubborn and perverse, or undisciplined and opposed to us, is a great grace, worthy of much praise, and a sign of virile strength.

There are some who know how to live in peace and also enjoy peace with others. And there are others who do not have peace

themselves, nor suffer others to enjoy peace ; they are troublesome to others, but still more troublesome to themselves. And there are still others who keep themselves in peace and procure to restore peace to others. Nevertheless all our peace, in this miserable life, must be placed more in humble suffering, than in not feeling adversities.

He who knows how to suffer will enjoy much peace, and he is a conqueror of himself, the lord of the world, the friend of Christ, and an heir of Heaven.

REFLECTIONS

A soul that is truly humble complains only of itself. It endeavours to excuse others, while it blames itself and is angry with no one but itself. I am resolved, therefore, to live in peace with God by obeying Him in all things, in peace with my neighbour, but not censuring his conduct or interfering with his affairs, and in peace with myself by combating and subduing on all occasions the emotions and repugnances of my heart... We cannot trust ourselves much, because we often lack grace and good sense. There is but little light in us and we can quickly lose this through negligence. Often we do not perceive that we are so blind interiorly.

We often do wrong, and, what is worse, we excuse ourselves. Sometimes we are moved by passion, and we think it is zeal. We reprove little things in others, and pass over serious things in ourselves. We are quick to resent and ponder that which we suffer from others, but we do not think of how much others suffer from us. He who reflects well and duly weighs his own deeds, would never judge others harshly.

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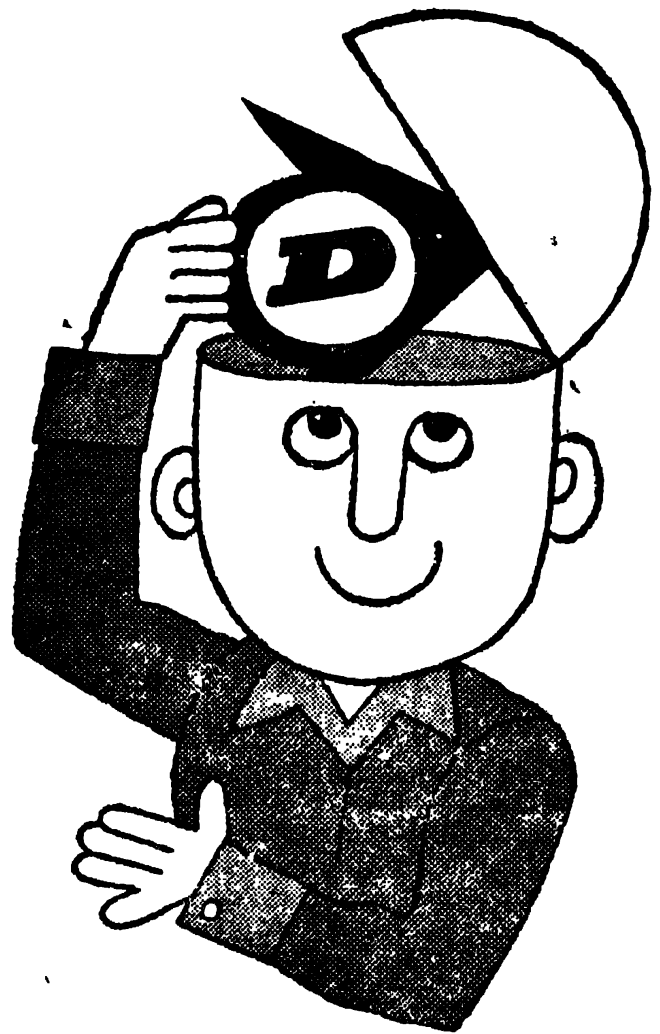
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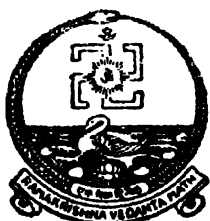
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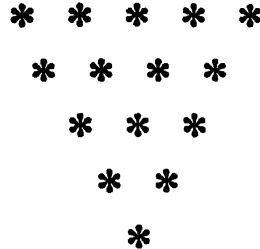
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Sri Sarada Devi

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The Divine Message

(A PLEA FOR MERCY)

Dear Ram! day after day I am in the heat of remorse.
O Thou, supremely merciful to the lowly, dispel my temptations.
I cannot hold in restraint this fickle heart of mine.
Without Thy help I am growing weary. Run, run now to my help.

All my life, O Ram, has passed without due worship of Thee.
In vain did I covet the wealth of my relatives and others;
O Ram, make my heart thine own.
Casting aside all other, may I, with trust, cling to Thee.

Pleasure that is born of sensual desires can never be joy.
Without Thee, O Ram, everything is revolting.
O Chief of the Raghu line, do for me what is for my good.
Drive my sins far away, and give me Thine own divine form.

Attempt as I may to destroy my heart's fickleness, I cannot destroy it.
Attempt as I may to break away from all family affection, I cannot break away.
And again and again this determination of my heart is lost.
Therefore, it is that with humble voice I plead for Thy mercy.

—Saint Ramdas

The Myth of Security

Two predominant drives that guide and shape human lives are the desire for security and the desire for happiness. Life moves apace with the momentum they provide. Of these two, the more fundamental one is the drive for security. It may be a truism to say that the urge to be happy operates within the boundaries imposed by the drive for security. None courts disaster by seeking pleasure overstepping the bounds of personal safety. Feelings of insecurity are not tolerable and always reveal themselves in aberrant behaviour, painful to the individual as well as to the society. All beings, therefore, first seek to be secure physically, and in the case of human beings, psychologically too. After having gained a firm footing, people try to enrich their lives with various pleasures and cultural refinements. The concern for the protection of body, its nourishment and well-being, occupies most of their time and attention. When the need for physical security is satisfied, the surplus energy is free to flow into other divergent channels of human interest. For a man who does not know from where his next meal will come, to him all happiness will seem to lie in food only. It is an indubitable fact that physical needs have overriding determinative effects on our lives. When people feel that they are sealed off from all dangers and comfortably settled among familiar objects and faces, in intimate surroundings, they tend to relax.

In the case of primitive man, who lived in caves, his sole concern was with his body, and his unevolved, unsophisticated mind had no other care than securing food and shelter. When the social instinct developed and there was such a thing as family life,

the cave got more comfortable. He wore animal skins for clothing; fire and tools were discovered and invented and life became less tenuous and rigorous. Though not wholly free from anxiety about security, he decorated the walls of his cave with rudimentary art and made that dwelling more habitable, in his own way. Early man began to manipulate his environment. Family bonds grew stronger, group life evolved and man discovered he could cultivate grain crops and store his food. Village life sprang up, clan leaders were recognized, and being governed by the persuasiveness imposed by brute strength, a few rules and regulations were accepted. Owing to environmental factors and some sense of ethnicity, group mind evolved, and there was more social cohesion. Early man enjoyed some degree of safety. Different social rules and observances probably grew owing to unique differences in geography and climate.

Enjoying security in this expansion of individual consciousness to include the wider society produced one drawback. Every man had to give up some of his individuality and independence. It was in a certain sense a false sense of security primitive man had thus gained. As people felt secure owing to life in familiar surroundings, with common language and common religious beliefs, they were putting their limbs, as it were, one by one, into a psychological strait-jacket. Cultural training, beliefs and dogmas were handed down from generation to generation, mostly unquestioned. Mostly unquestioned, because any enquiry entailed some risk to personal acceptance by the group. To maintain personal security the safest thing was always to go to the right—follow the conservative path. The common herd were satisfied with living quietly, without rocking

the boat. Happiness then consisted in just amassing wealth for the enjoyment of the physical peaceful life.

Only a few bold spirits, who were invariably present, could not rest in the moribund repetitive condition of eating, drinking, procreating, growing old and dying. They questioned and probed into the mass-hypnosis that the majority fell prey to. Heroic spirits, they raised their voices in every society, seemingly undaunted by the threat of clouds of insecurity, heard the sound of a distant drummer, and refused to follow and conform to all the injunctions of society. The *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* graphically describes that distant drummer, the ancient Ṛṣi—...*kas cid dhīraḥ pratyag-ātmānam aikṣad āvṛttacakṣur amṛtatvaṁ icchan. (the wise person, seeking Life Eternal, with his eyes turned inward, saw the Inner Self.)*—Therefore, leave the world to itself, allow nature's elements to form themselves in their own way. Be the witness, and discover that true security is hidden in you.

Why should truth have a very unsettling impact on most of our cherished worldly values? It is because our view of the world and our existence in it are entirely different from that of the enlightened souls. To us the world is all-important; to them it is nothing more than a playfield. In order to bridge the gap between their view and ours, we try all the clever methods—either picking and choosing those of their teachings that do not threaten to demolish our dream-world, or by trying to insulate ourselves from such disturbances. But truth is a storm which can blow off the ground under our feet and sow in us seeds of tremendous discontent. Human nature does not like to face truth boldly, even relative truth when it is discomforting. That is why most of us seek shelter in the mythical insularity of language, culture or ethnicism. The dreamer, lost in his dream, thinks it is the whole reality. For

a time his dream is bounded by granite hard walls. But these walls are actually paper walls and any passing wind reduces them to mere scraps. It is no doubt a painful lesson to be learned—some learn quickly and others take time.

Our minimal requirements are for food, shelter and clothing. When the organism is hungry, it needs food—not this or that dainty morsel. Shelter and clothing to protect from heat and cold is needed—not a building of specific architectural design, or clothes made up in a particular fashion, colour or material. The physical organism does not place exorbitant demands to maintain its existence. If a man is caught out of doors in a blizzard, the ice shelter of an Eskimo igloo is as good as heaven. To one who is dying of thirst, scented water cooled by refrigeration is not required. Modern people have grown accustomed to such “basic necessities”, actually quite far from actual requirements. It is due to the interference of our own minds.

The mind is the culprit that twists and turns simple matters into complications. Due to its false fear of ennui or monotony, it continually fabricates false desires and delivers them to our weak human nature. Once pampered, these desires become real ones and enter the list of our demands. We have, in yielding to the bad leadership of the mind's lower nature, unwittingly fallen into a trap from which it is very hard to come out. Mind is like a whimsical child. It is fickle and does not know what is for its own good. As Sri Śaṅkara has stated: if we want to enjoy tranquillity, then it is necessary to stop pleasing the mind—...*Ja tu cittasya lālanam*. Otherwise the mind, once convinced of its power to govern, becomes terrible, like a veritable tiger, capable of destroying the life itself. Says Śaṅkara in *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi*: *Mano nāma mahāvyaḡhro viṣayāraṇya bhūmiṣu...* (“In the forest-tract of sense-pleasure there prowls a huge tiger called the

mind..."). He warns us to be careful about this tiger.

Our feeling of complacency is the side effect of uncaredful or aimless living. Our only aim is to protect our complacency. We try to see and foresee that events either remain undisturbing to us, or try to improve our comforts according to the plan of our imagination. How fragile is this imagination! Beneath the surface of this lull of placidity, hidden from our view, active volcanoes are rumbling. They may crupt at any time and unsettle the slippery ground on which we sit. Ironically, in what our five sense organs present to us as the only reality of the universe, we have implicit and explicit trust. Beyond this limited horizon our vision is blank.

The sense of security for all physical organisms springs from natural impulses. The organism instinctively wards off any danger that threatens its extinction. It is careful and watchful to escape any injury to itself. The immanological system is strong enough to heal most injuries. But the indiscriminating mind does not permit the body's intelligence to mature and function in a healthy way. A glutton or an alcoholic or a drug addict wrecks his body owing to his unrestrained mind, lack of will power and runaway desires. It all has its foundation in the deep-rooted human identification with and attachment to his body. He never thinks as a conscious being that *he has a body* but, on the contrary, that *he is the body*. This topsy-turvy condition has sown the seed of untold suffering and anguish for all human life.

Mind, or ego, does not desire its own extinction. It wants to continue indefinitely and to endow the quality of immortality to the body also. None of us remember that we have to leave this world suddenly any day. It is one of the greatest wonders of the world. This is what King Yudhishthira said

to the *Yakṣa* in *The Mahābhārata*. Buddha called it *tanha*, this tenacious *clinging to life*. But who can give us any guarantee that we will not be afflicted by some terminal sickness, meet with a fatal accident or be destroyed in a war? Where is the assurance that we shall live long to wither away quietly in old age? Believing that our body will be always with us and can give us eternal security is a delusion. But our natural predilection to the contrary is so strong that it seems none is capable of escaping from it. To think deeply on it is discomfoting. It would perhaps be bearable except that so much suffering arises from our excessive attachment to our bodies and life. Sri Sarada Devi therefore, once pointed out the attitude of the spiritually awakened ones. She said, "What is this body? It is nothing but three pounds of ashes when it is cremated. Why so much vanity about it? However strong or beautiful this body may be, its culmination is in those three pounds of ashes. And still people are so attached to it."¹

If an energetic young man or woman, enjoying the world, robust, full of health and beautiful, is asked to think on the fact that youth and beauty should not be taken too seriously, he will shrug, laugh and go away. He may perhaps mutter, "Who are they to bring up such an awkward topic, except old fogies?" It is universal experience. A family man, young in years, rides the waves of success and wealth. He tries never to think that his euphoria is not the real life. A mere whiff of wealth or success in the world can be as intoxicating as strong wine.

Tyrants rise over portions of the earth with the momentary glory of meteors. They take a serious view of themselves as we do. But how long can they live and what can

1. *The Gospel of the Holy Mother* (Madras: Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, 1984) p. 49.

they do to the patient earth? Their end comes sooner than we expect. Not tyrants alone, all people invest their energies and hopes in what are, imagined to be solid, permanent investments for a secure future. Some seek security in fame, wealth or power; others in their kith and kin. A few seek it in knowledge. Sooner or later, the desperate mind, like the drowning man, grasps for straws to sustain itself. Buddha described a man being swept off by a turbulent current past the grassy banks of a river. Desperately he clutches at the grasses to slow his descent, but the attempt is a failure. Deaths of husbands and wives never deter people from remarrying; nor repeated deaths of children restrain begetting more. Security in the world is surely a myth and a chimera.

Why then seek security? It is obvious that we have to take care of our physical existence, and that breadwinners have to provide for rainy days, against disability and old age. Pursuit of wealth through right and honest means, and with the purpose of helping others, is not wrong. But there it should end. There should be a limit put on acquisitiveness. Security, if one probes deeper, is dependence. A dependent person is never happy or free from anxiety and fear. When one leans on something or someone for his happiness and security he is always vulnerable. Happiness is the absence of anxiety and dependence. If our lives are filled with uncertainty and anxieties, it is an indication that our struggles for happiness—to be rid of them—are misdirected. The urge to be secure, when it is pursued intensively, becomes tainted with greed. This selfish, isolated 'me', insulated from others, succumbs to greed, jealousy, hatred, fear and grief. This 'me', the imaginary entity threatened by everything holds on to something firm and secure for its protection. It is the root cause of all troubles. Buddha said, "I have no trouble, but 'I' is the trouble." Sri

Ramakrishna put it: "When this 'I' vanishes, all difficulties vanish."

The mystery of life has to be unravelled personally by every one. As separate individuals, 'islands', as it were, we can be neither secure nor happy. Real security lies elsewhere. Egoistic 'I-consciousness', the oppressive individuality, must be annihilated. When this is achieved there is absolute security. But it does not go so easily. Its concrete presence and intimidation are always felt. Any amount of knowledge engenders only a deepening of the root of its existence. Egoistic 'I-consciousness' is tyrannous because it is ever apprehensive and obsessed with itself. If flattered, it is elated, and it feels miserable when insulted. It interferes in all matters and vitiates the atmosphere. The 'I' is incessantly eager to become somebody in the world and, if thwarted, becomes jealous, angry and destructive. The fact is, as long as it is there it is not going to allow us to live in peace. In whatsoever way one may try to forget its presence, one cannot.

Is there no way to get rid of it? "There is a way." Sri Ramakrishna assures us. Outlining it, he says, "You may indulge in thousands of reasonings, but still the 'I' comes back. You may cut the peepul-tree to the very root today, but you will notice a sprout springs up tomorrow. Therefore, if the 'I' must remain, let the rascal remain as the servant 'I'. As long as you live, you should say, 'O God, Thou art the Master, and I am Thy servant.' The 'I' that feels, 'I am the servant of God, I am His devotee' does not injure one. Sweet things cause acidity of the stomach, no doubt, but sugar candy is an exception."² On another occasion the Master said to Keshab Sen, "You should give up only the 'unripe I'. The 'unripe I' makes one feel: 'I am the doer.

2. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*. (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, 1985) p. 170.

These are my wife and children. I am a teacher.' Renounce this 'unripe I' and keep the 'ripe I', which will make you feel that you are the servant of God, His devotee, and that God is the Doer and you are His instrument."³

This is surrendering the dwarf and mischievous 'I' at the altar of the Supreme Power of the Universe, which is the Ground of everything, by not allowing oneself to get attached excessively to objects—living and non-living. In a temporary life, morbid attachments are a curse. If one is afraid to resign oneself totally unto unseen God, he

—
Ibid., p. 269.

can at least trace the whereabouts of the 'I-sense', from whence and in what form it has come, and root it out. No one doubts the existence of the 'I' and it does not need any external proof. The Lord, or the Indivisible Consciousness pervading the entire universe, is the real security. The rest is a mirage. "We can get everything in and from the world."—this deeply embedded indoc-trination should be uprooted from our mind. For this the spiritual life is the only way. Spiritual freedom is never of the individual, but from the slavery of individuality. Watchfulness, effort, earnestness and holy company take one to that shoreless ocean of bliss and ultimate security.

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The Mother of All

SWAMI ATMASTHANANDA

(Continued from the previous issue)

Continuing his essay, Swami Atmasthananda unfolds more of the story of how the direct and lay-disciples of Sri Ramakrishna were able to discover the universal significance of the Holy Mother.

THE great famine of 1864-65 caught Bengal in its terrible grip. Sri Sarada Devi's father Ramachandra was poor but kind and charitable. He had saved some stock of grain from the previous year's harvest and at once opened a free kitchen, without thinking about the hardship it might cause to his own family. Hot *khichuḍi* (rice boiled with lentils) was served to the famished people. Eleven-year-old Sarada showed evidence of her universal motherhood even at that tender age: when hot food was served on leaf-plates she would stand there fanning, holding a big fan, which she had to grasp with both her hands in order to cool the food.

The Holy Mother kept herself informed of contemporary events of the world, and openly expressed her deep sorrow at the sufferings of people at the outbreak of the First World War, the repressive measures of the British Government against freedom fighters in India, and the sorrows of people brought on by floods, droughts and other natural calamities. Sometimes, unable to bear those sufferings of others, she would shed tears in silence. She once said to a young disciple, "How great is the sorrow of people you will understand when you grow up. You are not a mother." For all suffering people the Holy Mother was a real mother who cared.

Shiromanipur was a village not far from Jayarambati. The villagers mostly were Muslims who lived by cultivating mulberry

and rearing silk-worms. But owing to the large-scale import of foreign silk, many of them lost their trade and took to robbery as a means of livelihood. Some of them were employed in the construction of Mother's new house at Jayarambati. The Mother treated them as her own children. This brought about a transformation in many of them. Even the fastidious villagers began to say, "By the grace of the Mother the robbers too are becoming devotees."

A crazy woman used to come to the Mother at Dakshineswar. At first all took her to be merely insane and so treated her kindly. Afterwards, it turned out that she belonged to that class of spiritual aspirants who considered God as their sweetheart. This woman regarded Sri Ramakrishna as her Chosen Ideal, and one day ventured to speak out her attitude to him. This created a sudden commotion in the mind of Sri Ramakrishna as it was opposed to his own attitude of looking upon all women as manifestations of the Divine Mother. He started pacing up and down in his room condemning the crazy woman's attitude in strong colloquial Bengali. The Holy Mother heard all this from the *Nahabat*. Feeling humiliated by this insult to her daughter, she at once sent Golap Ma to call the crazy woman to her, and when the woman came, she said affectionately, "My daughter, you had better not go to him since your presence irritates him. You can come to me." The Mother

also remarked to Golap Ma that the Master ought not to have insulted the woman in this way. The poor woman found refuge in the Mother.

The Holy Mother was once staying at the Jagadamba Ashrama in Koalpara (near Jayarambati). The Ashrama was in a lonely place surrounded by a jungle frequented by wild animals, including bears. It was ten o'clock at night. The Holy Mother was sitting under a tree talking with her attendants. All on a sudden, she began to speak of the lunatic of Shihar (a neighbouring village). Hardly had she finished then the lunatic himself appeared, coming towards the Mother's house with a bundle of leafy vegetables under his arm. Everybody was frightened to see him, but the Mother remained calm. The mad man said he had brought some vegetables for her. She said to him softly, "Please go away; don't create any noise." But he said he could not go back as the river was in spate. Then the Mother told him in a persuasive and sweet voice, "My good child, don't you create any disturbance." Mother's love soothed the man's heart and he left the place in a peaceful mood. If Sri Sarada Devi could become the mother of dacoits, she could with equal facility become the mother of lunatics also.

The scene changes. The Mother is now at her Udbodhan house in Calcutta. It is the sacred hour of dusk. Mother is sitting on the first floor verandah telling the beads. Across the road is an open space where live some poor people of the labouring class. The evening stillness is suddenly broken by the sound of a man's beating his wife. After some blows, he gives her such a kick that she rolls down into the courtyard with her babe in her arms. The man still goes on kicking her. The Mother's *Japa* stops. Although she is well known for her shyness and gentleness, a change has now come over her. She stands up holding the railing

and shouts to the man, "I say, you wretch, are you going to kill your wife? Alas, what a pity!" The man, who had become mad with anger looks up, and the sight of the motherly figure acts like a charm on a hooded snake. With lowered head he leaves the scene. The Mother's sympathy makes the woman burst into tears, and the man comes back to console her. Seeing this happy ending, the Mother sits down and resumes her *Japa*. Thus has the Holy Mother shown herself the Mother of the downtrodden and insulted.

At Dakshineswar, Sri Ramakrishna had earmarked a few of his young disciples as the founding members of his future monastic order. After the Master's passing away they came together one by one—Naren, Rakhal, Sarat, Sashi, Latu, Yogin, Baburam and others. The Holy Mother was to them an unfailing source of strength, and they rallied round her as their centre. Right from their early days at Dakshineswar, the Mother used to regard them as her own children. She always kept a watchful eye upon them, and her protective influence was felt by every one of them. It was only natural that they all looked upon her as their own true Mother. For, right from the beginning they had firm conviction that the Holy Mother was not an ordinary woman, but the help-mate of Sri Ramakrishna in his mission on earth. For them she was the Divine Mother Herself, who had assumed the human form.

More than anyone else it was Swami Vivekananda who understood the universal significance of the Mother's life and recognized her central role in the regeneration of Indian culture. Before starting his long travels in India as a mendicant monk, Swamiji first begged for the Mother's blessings. Again, when the call came to go to the West, he sought the Mother's advice before making his decision. Later on he wrote in a poem, "I am the servant of you

both; I salute your feet united with *Śakti*." In a letter to fellow disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, Swamiji spoke of the Holy Mother as 'the living Durgā'. Swamiji used to wash his mouth and sprinkle Ganga water on his body in order to purify himself 'before he went in her presence. He would salute her by making a full-length prostration, but he never touched her feet which he regarded as too holy. In his letters Swamiji revealed to the world Holy Mother's true divine nature. He often expressed his desire to start an Order of nuns first, with the Holy Mother as its Ideal, an inauguration of a New Age of womanhood.

Swami Brahmananda, the spiritual son of Ramakrishna, used to be so much overwhelmed with devotion in the presence of the Holy Mother that his whole body would tremble. He regarded her as the embodiment of the Power of Brahman. He used to say, "*Mother is none other than the Divine Mother of the Universe, who has assumed a human form.*"

Among the disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, Lātu Mahārāj (Swami Adbhutananda) was the Holy Mother's first attendant, and he regarded her as his own mother. He used to say, "*Is it easy to understand the Mother? She could accept the worship offered by Sri Ramakrishna, just think of her power! What the Holy Mother's real identity was, he alone knew—of course, Swami Vivekananda also understood a little. She was none other than the Goddess Lakṣmi.*"

The Holy Mother's first 'burden bearer' after the Master's passing away was Swami Yogananda. He would never salute her standing in front of her; instead, when Mother left the place, he would collect a little of the dust of that spot and reverently touch it to his head. He had the vision of the Primal Power embodied in her.

After the death of Swami Yogananda, for a short time Swami Trigunatitananda took

over the burden of looking after the Mother. His devotion to her service was unbounded. Once he was prepared to take an extreme step. Holy Mother was travelling to Jayaram-bati in an ox-cart with Swami Trigunatitananda walking alongside as guard. It was a long journey and the Mother was resting. On the way the Swami saw that a part of the road had been washed out by recent rains and there was a possibility of the cart being upset at that place. Not wishing to disturb the Mother, he ran ahead and stretched himself across that depression in the road and ordered the cartman to drive the cart over his body. Fortunately the Mother awoke in time, got down and went round the place on foot. She scolded the Swami for his rash act. On another occasion the Swami went to buy some good quality hot chillies for the Mother. He walked three miles tasting chillies in different shops until his tongue became painfully swollen.

When Trigunatitananda was still in teens he had been sent by Sri Ramakrishna to the Holy Mother to receive initiation from her. On that occasion the Master had quoted a Bengali couplet to him: "*Infinite is the māyā of Rādhā which defies definition—a million Kṛṣṇas and a million Rāmas are born, and live, and die.*" The faith in the Mother that the Master induced in the boy on this occasion never left him.

Another 'burden bearer' was Swami Saradananda who, however, regarded himself only as the Mother's doorkeeper. His attitude towards the Mother was expressed in his *Rāmakṛṣṇa Stotram* couplet: "*I salute Sarada Devi, the Embodiment of all knowledge, Who exists in Sri Ramakrishna; as within fire, the burning power dwells.*"

For Swami Shivananda, the Mother was the highest appellate court. Any decision made by her regarding the Order and its young members was accepted by him with his whole heart. This *Mahā-Puruṣ Mahārāj*

(great-souled one) who became the second President of the Order, once said in a reminiscing mood, *"She is not an ordinary woman. She is not one who attained perfection through struggle and practice. She is the Ever-Perfect. She is a part of the Primordial Power, just as are Kālī, Tārā, Soḍaṣī, Bhuvanesvarī and other Goddesses."*

In the eyes of Swami Akhandananda, the great exemplar of Swamiji's ideal of 'Service to God in Man', the Holy Mother was Annapūrṇā (the Bestower of Nourishment on the world), Viśveśvarī (the Divine Mother), Jagaddhātṛī (Creator of the Universe), and Lakṣmī (Giver of Fortune) of Vaikunṭha.

Swami Vijnanananda, whom Swami Brahmananda described as 'a hidden knower of Brahman', used to say, *"Sri Ramakrishna is the Embodiment of the Spirit, the Holy Mother is the Embodiment of thought-force: She is the nature of Cosmic Power."*

Swami Premananda, who was himself an ocean of love, has given expression to his experience through this significant utterance: *"I find the Holy Mother to be a vaster source of Power even than Sri Ramakrishna himself. And how great is her capacity for self-concealment! The inherent divine nature of Sri Ramakrishna used to show itself in spite of his efforts to hide it. The Holy Mother also gets bhāva-samādhi, but does she let everyone know about it? How much power she has, to keep her spiritual moods under control!"*

Swami Abhedananda, the 'Lion of Vedānta', whose hymn to the Holy Mother, *Sārādādevī Stotram*, is well known, looked upon the Mother as *Sarasvatī (the Giver of Wisdom)*, and *Mahāmāyā (the Giver of Liberation)*.

Swami Ramakrishnananda, the exemplar of *dāsyā-bhakti* (attitude of servant to God),

had a wonderful vision of the Holy Mother on his death bed. Based on his description of it, Girish Chandra Ghosh later on composed a hymn beginning with the line *"Behold my Mother whose smiling face is lit with the crimson glow of wisdom! She, the Giver of Boons, now grants me refuge."* In a letter to a devotee of Bangalore, Ramakrishnananda wrote: *"You should never lose this very rare and unexpected opportunity to worship the Motherhood of God in her. She is your real Mother....It is so fortunate you are to have the Mother of the Universe at your very door!"*

Swami Advaitananda, who used to do marketing for the Mother, served her with great devotion. He was older in age and yet he looked upon her as his own mother. He was one of the very few men with whom she used to talk freely.

Swami Turiyananda, who was the very personification of the Advaita Vedānta, paid his homage to the Holy Mother this way: *"What a great Power has assumed this form for the welfare of the world! The mind which we struggle hard to raise from the lower levels to the heart-centre, the same mind she has brought down from higher levels to the heart-centre forcefully, by thinking about Radhu. Now try to understand what it all means. Glory to the great Divine Mother!"*

Swami Niranjanananda, who was regarded as belonging to that class of Souls called by Sri Ramakrishna *Īśvarakoti-s* (the eternally-free), was the first to reveal the greatness of the Holy Mother in the circle of the Master's devotees. With uninhibited faith and reverence he used to proclaim that she was not just the wife of their Guru, but the *Divine Mother of the Universe, the Supreme Creatrix*.

Swami Subodhananda, called '*Khoka*' (babe in-arms) by the Mother and the dis-

ciples of Sri Ramakrishna, glorified the Mother with the following words: "*The priests of this place celebrate the festival of Annakūṭa (in which a huge mound of rice is distributed as prasāda), but it is only a show. How vast is the real Annakūṭa of the Divine Mother who feeds all the living beings of this universe! If we think of it, our minds will soar to higher realms.*"

As Sri Sarada Devi was the mother of the monastic disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, she was in no way less so the mother of the lay disciples. Sri 'M', (Mahendra Nath Gupta), Nag Mahashay, Balaram Bose, Akshay Sen, Manomohan, Navagopal, Haramohan, Devendra and others were highly favoured children of the Mother. Gradually, in due course, they came to realize in her the Divine Nature—that she was not merely the wife of the Guru, but the eternal consort of Sri Ramakrishna in the unfoldment of his divine *Līlā* from age to age. She manifested herself to them in their mystic experiences. 'M', the author of *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, regarded the Holy Mother as his own mother. He began his diaries with the invocation: "...*Taking refuge at the feet of my Guru and Mother*". Each volume of the original Bengali original of the *Gospel* has been dedicated to the Mother with the lines: "*Mother, you are the Mother of the Universe. Kindly bless that all your children in all places and for all time may attain peace and joy in their hearts by thinking of Sri Ramakrishna and that they may have devotion to His Lotus Feet.*"

Nag Mahashay was another householder disciple of the Master who was greatly devoted to the Holy Mother. In fact his devotion was unparalleled. Nag Mahashay was a veritable personification of humility, hardly conceivable, even by those who never saw him. In the presence of the Mother he would completely lose external consciousness

and could utter only the word 'Mother, Mother'. This was his condition when he came to pay his respects to Holy Mother. The Mother herself had to feed him with her own hands. When he left her presence, he was heard muttering, "*Mother is more compassionate than Father, Mother is more compassionate than Father.*"

Sri Ramakrishna regarded Balaram Bose as one of his chief *rasaddārs* or providers. Balaram served the Holy Mother also devotedly. His whole family became blessed by worshipping the Mother as the Supreme Goddess. Balaram used to refer to the Mother as "*the Embodiment of the ascetic virtue of patience*".

Akshay Kumar Sen, nicknamed 'the Gremlin' (*Śāṅkunnī*) by Swamiji, has in his celebrated epic, *Srī Rāmākṣṇa Puṭhi*, glorified the Holy Mother as follows:

*Glory, glory to Holy Mother, Mother of
Universe,
Eternal Brahman with and without
attributes.
Incomparable you are : formless, impartite,
You are Puruṣa, Prakṛti, the Supreme
The Primordium of creation, the
Root of All,
You are the twenty-four categories, gross
and subtle.
By Your will is the universe created and
sustained,
And destroyed when you draw it on to
your lap.
All things created are toys in your
play box.
Playful You are, frolicsome, ever playing,
playing.*

Another devotee, Manomohan Mitra, had visions of the Holy Mother as the Goddess Lakṣmi. The well known writer in Bengali Devendra Mazumdar, had a prayer-hall known as 'Sri Ramakrishna Archanālaya' at Fntally in Calcutta. Invited by Devendra,

the Mother visited this place a few times. Devendra's worship took the form of this song to the Mother:

*Here I am your naughty child ;
comfort me, O Mother, taking me on
your lap.*

*To whom else can I go, Mother ?
abandoned as I am by Father without
mercy.*

*I roam playing here and there,
knowing that's why you don't talk
with me.*

*Never have I heard this—
that mother mourns not a wicked son's
death.*

Swami Vivekananda's classmate, Hara-mohan Mitra, used to spend money un-
stintingly in the service of the Holy Mother. When the 'hogala-flower' bangles on her hands became unfit for wear owing to long use, Haramohn got new ones made for her. Another devotee, Manindra Krishna Gupta, the son of the poet Ishwar Chandra, received Mother's special love.

Among the householder devotees of Sri Ramakrishna, the famous playwright, Girish Chandra Ghosh, had a special relationship with the Holy Mother. He said, "Did we ourselves recognize her in the earlier days ? It was Niranjan who opened our eyes." From that time onwards Girish looked upon the Holy Mother as the Divine Mother of the Universe, of whom once in his early youth, he had a wonderful vision while lying alone seriously ill. In answer to Girish's rather blunt question—"What kind of a mother

are you ?"—Sri Sarada Devi replied without a moment's hesitation: "*I am your own real mother—a mother not because of being your Guru's wife, not because of any assumed relationship, not by way of mere empty talk, but truly your mother.*"

This reply was meant not for Girish alone, it was addressed to all her children. When his only son died in early childhood, Girish was utterly disconsolate and, to bring peace to his grief-stricken soul, Swami Niranjana-nanda took him to Jayarambati. There Mother took great care of him, and her pure and unselfish love turned the great poet into a child at her feet. In Jayarambati, Girish got some clearer understanding of the true greatness and divinity of the Holy Mother. When the Mother's own brother, Kali Prasad expressed his inability to understand the divine nature of the Mother, Girish thundered: "You are a mere village Brahmin's son...Is it then impossible for the Great Source of all delusion to keep you labouring under the notion that she is merely your sister, for the whole of your life ? *Go, and if you want freedom here and hereafter, take refuge at Her feet at once. I say go!*"

On another occasion, in Calcutta, Girish openly declared to a group of devotees in the presence of the Mother "...*She is the Mother of the Universe—Muhāmāyā, Makāśakti, appearing on the earth for the salvation of creatures, and at the same time exemplifying the Ideal of true motherhood.*"

(to be continued)

First Chapel to Sri Ramakrishna

SWAMI AMARESHANANDA

The first place of worship for Sri Ramakrishna—where and when did it come into existence? Interestingly, it was at a devotee's house. Swami Amareshananda, a monk of the Order, Belur Math unfolds some of its history.

A TINY seed of the Banyan, going unnoticed at first, sprouts and grows in course of time into a gigantic tree providing shade and shelter to a large number of people. Similarly, just a century ago, the name of Sri Ramakrishna, current only among a limited circle of citizens of Calcutta, has today become a household name. Now lakhs of people look upon him as God-incarnate and worship him as their Ideal of Life (*Iṣṭa Devata*), while quite a good number of chapels and temples stand dedicated to him in India and abroad.

The genesis of the worship dates back to the very lifetime of the Master himself. Five categories of people came to Dakshineswar to keep his holy company: Some were curious visitors; some were people seeking solutions for mundane problems; some belonging to various faiths were searching for guidance in the spiritual life; a few were families, all of whose members had been devoted to him for years; and a handful were pure, earnest youths who came to belong to his 'inner circle', later transformed into spiritual dynamos and torch-bearers. Sri Navagopal Ghosh was the head of a family, of the fourth category. He and all the members of his family looked upon the Master as God-incarnate, the pole-star of their lives, and passed on this heritage to their descendants.

Sri Navagopal Ghosh, born in Begampur village of Hooghly District in 1832, resided in the Badurbagan neighbourhood of Calcutta. He was by nature gentle, cheerful and

kind, and held a top executive post in the English firm, M/s Henderson Company. He distributed medicines free of cost to the poor, and supported many from time to time. Being endowed with a religious temperament Navagopal used to take delight in religious festivals, took part in group singing and lived a contented spiritual life. Early in life he was married twice and each time his wife died prematurely. Finally he married a third time to the devout Nistarini Dēvi. In her dwelt the Goddess of Fortune as well as a current of devotion. She had even in youth developed remarkable devotion to God and had instilled the same fervour into the sons and daughters of her family.

Once Navagopal chanced to hear about Paramahansa Deva of Dakshineswar and became at once eager to meet him. Accordingly, one Sunday with his wife he proceeded to Dakshineswar. After preliminaries it was the practice with Sri Ramakrishna to guide each seeker along a path best suited to his nature. Not much is known about this first meeting of Navagopal with the Master, but so instructed, Navagopal began to chant and sing the Divine name daily without any interruption. Of course this was to his liking, so every morning he along with his wife and children used to sing together the divine names to the accompaniment of cymbals and *khol*, a type of musical percussion instrument.

Nearly three years went by but Navagopal had not visited the Master at Dakshineswar for the second time. The Master however

did not forget his devotees. He made enquiries through Kishori Roy, who happened to be a friend of Navagopal saying, "Hallo, some three years ago, with you came here a gentleman who lived in Badurbagan holding a high post in an office, and who distributed medicines free to the poor, where is he nowadays? If you meet him, ask him to come over here, once at least."¹

On hearing of the kind enquiries of Sri Ramakrishna through his friend, Navagopal's eyes filled with tears of gratitude and joy. Taking his family with him, he at once hastened to Dakshineswar. To Sri Ramakrishna's enquiry about his long absence, the devotee replied that he had been meticulously following the instructions imparted to him. Sri Ramakrishna then advised Navagopal not to simply confine himself to the routine practices, but to come to Dakshineswar frequently so that he could make progress and easily reach the state of divine bliss. Thereafter whenever he was free, Navagopal used to come to the Master with his family. We may recall the assurance Sri Krishna gave to Arjuna in the *Gītā* (IX. 22):

"...Yoga-kṣemam vahāmyaham"

"Those devotees who are ever
devoted to Me :
to them I carry what they lack..."

Sri Ramakrishna really took over responsibility for the devotee.

Gradually Sri Ramakrishna completely possessed the hearts of the family and became their Preceptor and Chosen Deity (*Guru-o-Iṣṭa*) in one. Navagopal's son, Suresh, was then five or six years old and even at this very tender age was a talented player of the *khol* in accompaniment to

singing. Sri Ramakrishna loved this boy very much.

In those days devotees having the means, in order to benefit by the blessed company and presence of Sri Ramakrishna, by turn invited him to their homes and organized religious meetings on Sundays. Navagopal too, taking the cue from others, earnestly requested Sri Ramakrishna to sanctify his home. And after getting the Master's consent arranged a religious festival. On that auspicious day when *Bhāgavata* reading was in progress, Sri Ramakrishna arrived. When the attention of all the assembled devotees was drawn to him, the reading did not proceed further. He took a seat and shortly thereafter, Banavari, the noted Vaiṣṇava musician with his group of *saikīrtan* singers commenced singing. Sri Ramakrishna, who was already in divine inebriation, was stirred up by the music and in a virile mood he leapt amidst the orchestra and stood motionless in the posture of Sri Krishna playing the flute (*Tribhangi Muralidhar*). Slowly he entered the state of *Mahābhāva*. Navagopal Ghosh had kept two beautiful garlands made of fragrant flowers to adorn the Master. Seeing him in that God-intoxicated mood the devotee placed those flowers on his neck and began to dance round the Master. Some shed tears of joy, and a few who were unable to check their emotions lay flat on the floor.

Women devotees used to remain in the inner apartments and offer separately their respects to Sri Ramakrishna on such occasions. On this occasion Nistarini Devi and other women devotees, busy in the inner apartments on the first floor, were arranging to serve food to all the assembled people. They were also eagerly waiting to pay their respects to Sri Ramakrishna. Regaining partially his normal mood and being helped by others he went upstairs. The women devotees who were waiting then offered their

1. Swami Gambhirananda. *Sri Rāmakṛṣṇa Bhakta Mālikā* (Calcutta: Udbodhan Karyalaya). Part II, pp. 363-4.

obeisance and Nistarini was blessed by him.

Sri Ramakrishna, who could see the innermost of a person, sometimes used to awaken the spiritual consciousness lying dormant in qualified aspirants. He would do this either by a mere look, or a touch or by writing a sacred *mantra* (a name of God) on the tongue with his finger. (Swami Vivekananda describes this particular power of the Master in his famous 'Hymn to the Divinity of Sri Ramakrishna'—*Vimalanayana-vikṣane-mohajāya...*) On this occasion Nistarini Devi, overflowing with motherly devotion, beseeched Sri Ramakrishna to allow her to feed him with her own hand. In an exalted mood the Master asked her, "Who are you to feed me?"² After a little pause, knowing her deep devotion and pious nature, the Master allowed her to put food into his mouth. To her utter surprise, while so doing she felt that some great spiritual presence residing in him had accepted the food. Being fed three or four morsels in this way, the Master became normal and resumed taking his food himself. On some earlier occasion Sri Ramakrishna had indicated that Nistarini was endowed with an element of *Chinnamastā*, a form of the Divine Mother embodying divine knowledge. Once she had remained in an exalted spiritual mood for six months.³

The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna contains stray references about Navagopal Ghosh. Other books like *Paramahamsadever Jivānavṛttānta* (*The Life of Paramahansa Deva*) by Ramchandra Dutta; *Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa Puṇthi*, by Akshaya Kumar Sen, and others give some more details. Finding Navagopal shedding tears of joy at the sight of Sri Ramakrishna in *samādhi* gives us an indication of his mental make-up. Navagopal was

one of the older devotees assigned to attend Sri Ramakrishna at Shyampukur and Cossipore during his last illness.

When Sri Ramakrishna was seriously ill at the Cossipore garden house, Navagopal's family used to visit him as often as they could. During one of these visits Nistarini Devi, who was frank and free with him, was asked by Sri Ramakrishna if she would agree to take charge of a cat with kittens which had taken shelter with him. Before handing them over to her, he got confirmed by her that it would not entail any undue hardship or be disapproved of by her husband. Nistarini Devi replied, "It will be my great good fortune, and I like to keep cats and kittens anyway. You are giving; it is your grace."⁴ Though Sri Ramakrishna's mind soared high, yet he took note of minute details in all matters and paid proper attention to them. On her part, Nistarini Devi accepted his gift with all humility and felt blessed. She never allowed anyone to ill treat the kittens.

Then came a memorable day, January 1, 1886. Though lying seriously ill, Sri Ramakrishna became the 'Wish-fulfilling Tree' of epic fame (*Kalpataru*). He blessed and bestowed his unbounded grace on some thirty devotees who happened to be present at Cossipore on that day. Ramchandra Dutta, having just got the Master's blessing, seeing Navagopal Ghosh, eagerly called him, "Sir! What are you doing here? Hurry up, be quick! If you want any favour from Sri Ramakrishna, ask for it, today he has become the 'Kalpataru'! Hearing these words of Ram, Navagopal hastened to Sri Ramakrishna, offered obeisance and implored: "O Lord, what will be my lot?" Sri Ramakrishna, after a pause, asked him, "Can you do *japa* and meditation?" Replied Nava-

2. *Ibid.*, p. 366.

3. Kalijiban Sharma, *Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa Lila Abhidhān* (Calcutta: Karuna Prakashani) p. 132.

4. *Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa Bhakta Mālikā*, Part II, p. 367.

gopal, "I am a householder having responsibility for wife, children and other dependents. Where is the time left for carrying on *japa* and meditation? I am afraid I shall not be able to do it." Again, Sri Ramakrishna asked, "Can you not do even a small number [of *japam*]?" Reply came, "Even for that, where is the time, Sir?" Sri Ramakrishna simply asked him, "Well can you remember me and chant my name?" Navagopal, overwhelmed with joy, replied, "Certainly! That I can do!" Sri Ramakrishna then assured him, "That will do. You need not do anything else."⁵

Thereafter Navagopal Ghosh used to chant with deep feeling the Master's name most of the time. Returning from his office every evening he used to distribute sweets to the children of the locality and repeat the Master's name. The children used to call out "Jai Ramakrishna"—Hail to Sri Ramakrishna! and dance round him playfully. In the neighbourhood he became thus known as 'Jai Ramakrishna'. After the passing away of Sri Ramakrishna, while Swamis Brahmananda and Turiyananda were undergoing severe austerities at Vrindavan, Navagopal too went there with his son Nirod and spent some time in their holy company. He went also to Vindhyachal and returned to Calcutta with Swami Brahmananda.

Navagopal Ghosh had such a fascination for the name Ramakrishna that, finding a locality in the Howrah area bearing the name 'Ramakrishnapur Lane', he purchased a house in this lane and shifted his residence from Badurbagan. He added a spacious room to it on the first floor, provided it with an altar and marble floor and began using it as his chapel. On the auspicious *Māgh Pūrṇimā* (full moon day of Magh, 6 Feb. 1898), in the morning, Swami Vivekananda, accompanied by Swamis Adbhuta-

nanda, Brahmananda, Premananda, Subodhananda, and Turiyananda, came to Navagopal's house by country boat, all the way singing devotional songs with cymbal and *khol*. With the blowing of conchs and due solemnity in the presence of all the great monks, Navagopal installed and dedicated the picture of Sri Ramakrishna in the new shrine. Swamiji himself sat on the worshipper's seat and worshipped the Master's photo. As the worship came to an end, he composed extempore the now famous lines:

*Om, sthāpakāya ca dharmasya,
Sarvadharmo swarūpine,
Avatāra Variṣṭhāya,
Rāmakṛṣṇāya te namaḥ.*

"Establisher of righteousness, Embodiment of all religions; Best of Avatāras, to Thee I bow."

Then with great feeling the household requested Swami Vivekananda to pray to Sri Ramakrishna that he always reside in the chapel. Swamiji humorously remarked, "For fourteen generations Sri Ramakrishna (his line) never dwelt in such a fine building with marble flooring! If he does not reside here, where will he?"

Some call this chapel of Navagopal the first and oldest chapel of the Master, since the monastery (*Math*) had always been located in rented buildings and was shifted from place to place a few times, only at the end being finally established at the Belur Math. There was a mart of joy on that day in Ramakrishnapur Lane. From then onwards, even till today, descendants of Navagopal Ghosh offer daily worship and observe *Māgh Pūrṇimā* with a festive special worship of Sri Ramakrishna. The day is celebrated with great joy. Subsequently, as the original chapel was located adjacent to a living room, a separate hall was constructed on the second floor and the chapel shifted there. A new picture of Sri Ramakrishna

5. *Ibid.*, p. 367.

on porcelain, made in Germany, was later consecrated by Swami Brahmananda. Besides himself being an ardent devotee, Navagopal also brought Nagendra Ghosh, Dr. Ramlal Ghosh, Haran Babu, and others into the fold of the Master's circle of devotees.

The eleventh book of the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, particularly the twenty-three chapters from seven to twenty-nine, are called *The Uddhava Gītā*—"The Last Message of Sri Krishna to Uddhava". They deal with the doctrine of Bhakti and Jñāna. While discoursing on the ways of devotion and worship, the Lord lays stress on service rendered to holy men, listening to the scriptures and meditating, building and maintaining temples and organizing and celebrating special festivals, and feeding the devotees with sacramental food.⁶ These injunctions were carried out true to the letter and spirit for many years by Sri Navagopal Ghosh and his family.

Sri Ramakrishna used to caution his householder devotees, engaged in the spiritual life, of the dangers of losing one's balance due to excessive attachment to worldly relations. He used to advise them to hold on to the Lord at all times, in fortune and adversity alike. When one of Navagopal's married daughters died suddenly, everyone in the family was broken down in sorrow and dejection. But Navagopal maintained his calm, and smoking his chillum in his usual way said, "All is His will; there is nothing to grieve over." Thus he corroborated the *Bhāgavatam* statement: "*The association with sons, wives, dear friends, and other relatives is no better than*

the chance gathering of a group of travellers in a caravanserai."⁷

Like her husband, Nistarini Devi too, was a great devotee. She acquired perfection in *japa*, the repetition of the Lord's name. She had a vision of Sri Ramachandra, her *Iṣṭa*, through *japa*. Once when she was offering obeisance to Him, in the process of touching His feet, she actually saw the form of her Guru, Sri Ramakrishna. When the Holy Mother, Sri Sarada Devi was in Vrindavan, for about a year after the passing away of the Master, during a vesper service in the Rādhārāman temple, she saw in a vision Nistarini Devi fanning the presiding Deity and after returning to her residence she narrated to Yogin Mā, "Yogen, Navagopal Babu's wife is very pure. I saw her like this."⁸ Holy Mother, too, sanctified the house of Navagopal by her visit, invited by Nistarini Devi, in August 1909.

Nistarini Devi cherished great respect and love for the monks of Belur Math. If she heard that any one of them was ill, she took the ailing monk into her house and arranged for his treatment, diet and nursing till his recovery. Those were the days when there was not much provision for taking care of sick monks at the Belur Math due to paucity of funds. The monks found their loving mother in her.

Swami Brahmananda visited the pious household of Navagopal many a time. Shyam-sundar and Nirod, two of the sons of Navagopal were his disciples. Both of them were greatly devoted to him, like their parents had been to Sri Ramakrishna. On the passing away of Swami Brahmananda, Shayam-

मज्जन्मकर्मकथनं मम पर्वानुमोदनम् ।

गीताताण्डववादित्रगोष्ठीभिर्मद्गृहोत्सवः ॥

ममार्चिस्थापने श्रद्धा स्वतः संहृत्य चोद्यमः ।

उद्यानोपवनाक्रीडपुरमन्दिरकर्मणि ॥

—*Srimad Bhagavatam* (XI. 11.36 & 38)

7. पुत्रदाराप्तबन्धूनां सङ्गमः पान्थसङ्गमः ।

—*Ibid.* (XI. 17.53)

8. Swami Gambhirananda, *Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, 1955) p. 143.

sundar, by this time grown up, donated Rupees forty thousand towards the construction of the Brahmananda temple at the Math.⁹ Swami Abhayananda, used to reminisce that "Shyam Babu, son of Navagopal, bore almost the entire expense of the construction of the temple, even for the statue of Swami Brahmananda inside." He recounted that every day Shyam Babu used to come to the Math on a white horse and watch the progress of the construction till it was completed and dedicated by Swami Shivananda in 1924.

In April 1909, at the age of seventy-seven, Navagopal had a premonition of his coming end. He drew all his family members close to him and blessed them, saying in a firm voice, "Do not grieve. The physical body is bound to perish. Sri Ramakrishna is our real Master. We are his children. He will take care of you. Instead of grieving, call on him."¹⁰

Navagopal carried out the instructions of Sri Ramakrishna that he had received on the Kalpataru Day, to remember him and chant his name, till his last breath. Chanting his sweet name and feeling a sense of complete fulfilment, Navagopal breathed his last, his face beaming with joy. He demonstrated how an ideal householder should live: "One

who is devoted to Me, can continue to live in the home itself till his end, performing all duties as offerings to me."¹¹

Nistarini Devi, in her old age, when she was lying ill, felt joy when the monks, the authorities at Belur Math, arranged for her nursing just as she used to look after them. She was then in her 'Divine Mood of *Chinnamastā*' and could not bear the touch of impure persons. In that exalted spiritual mood she passed away.

The other son of the family, Nirod, joined the Belur Math at the tender age of eighteen in 1902. His parents were all praise for his taking up the monastic life. He was ordained with *sannyāsa* by his guru, Swami Brahmananda in 1914 and was given the name Ambikananda. He was well known for his musical ability and was also good in painting. It is said that only after deep meditation on different deities, he used to paint his pictures of the gods and goddesses. Once he was asked by Swami Brahmananda to set a melody for the *Rāma Nāma Saṅkīrtana* which was included in the Bengali drama, *Rāmānuja*. The same is sung now on *Ekādaśī* days in most of the Ramakrishna Mission Centres. Swami Ambikananda passed away while leading an austere life in the Punjab in 1954.

9. *Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa Līlā Abhidhān*, p. 132.

10. *Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa Bhakta Mālikā*. Part II, p. 371.

11. *The Bhāgavatam*, XI. 17.50

12. Nalini Ranjan Chattopadhyaya, *Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa O Banga Rangamancha* (Calcutta: Mandal Book House) p. 102.

Devotee: The soil of India is different. Only what is true survives here.
Master (Sri Ramakrishna): Yes, that is so. The Sanatana Dharma, the Eternal Religion declared by the Rishis, will alone endure. But there will also remain some sects. Everything appears and disappears by the will of God.

Universal Religion and the Spiritual Humanism of Radhakrishnan

DR. SONAL K. AMIN

Torn by many conflicts, wars and religious bickering, human society staggers and reels. But saints and great souls like Vivekananda and Dr. Radhakrishnan appear, and with rare leadership and wisdom reestablish human fellowship on a universal basis of compassion and love. Dr. Sonal K. Amin teaches Philosophy at the Mankuvarbai Mahila Mahavidyalaya, Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh.

DR. S. RADHAKRISHNAN is amongst the foremost contemporary writers and thinkers. The sweep of his comprehension is almost encyclopaedic. One is astounded at the range of his interests—philosophy, literature, poetry, science, history, culture, civilization and religion. Nehru, Gandhi, Aurobindo, Vivekananda, Tagore and Radhakrishnan are writers and thinkers of great distinction. Nehru and Radhakrishnan, who took up a cultural offensive against the Occident, wrote exclusively in English, and had an impressive hearing in the West. The names of C. Rajagopalachari and Tagore come to mind as bilingualists. Contemporary Indian writers have their roots in the Indian soil. It is on the Indian culture, tradition and thought that they build. Radhakrishnan along with K. C. Bhattacharya built their philosophy after a thorough assimilation of the Indian and European thought systems. Radhakrishnan's works, storehouse of illustrative material, are interpretative as well as constructive. His lucid and illustrative style coupled with his wonderful power of expression and mastery over the English language has captivated the modern mind.

Radhakrishnan has given a new garb to the Upaniṣadic message of the Ātman being supreme and the purpose of human life being its realization through intuition. The old Upaniṣadic theme is interpreted in the light of the modern predicament.

In both Radhakrishnan and Vivekananda spiritual humanism and universal religion play a key role. The difference lies in Vivekananda being an Advaita Vedantin in the tradition of Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja—Absolutism with Theism. The cardinal concepts in the philosophy of Radhakrishnan are Spirit, Religion and Intuition.

Gandhiji is relevant to mankind for his belief in Truth and Non-violence. Nehru, for his doctrine of *Panchsheel* to solve international conflicts. Radhakrishnan will always be remembered for his concept of Universal Religion and Spiritual Humanism whereby all human conflicts will end—internal as well as external; and the entire cosmos will manifest as *Sat*, *Cit* and *Ānanda*. A true brotherhood of divine beings in a divine universe.

Commenting upon the plight of modern society, Radhakrishnan says:

We have a world of rationalistic prophets, of selfish individualists, of a monstrous economic system compounded out of industrialism and capitalism, of vast technical achievements and external conquests, of continual craving for creative comforts and love of luxury, of unbridled and endless covetousness in public life, of dictatorship of blood and brutality, anxious to make the world a shamble, dripping with human blood, of atheism and disdain

for the soul, a world in which nothing is certain and men have lost assurance."¹

Only 'spiritual religion' can give back this lost assurance.

In his *An Idealist View of Life*, Radhakrishnan examines the various substitutes for religion and finds them all wanting—Naturalistic Atheism, Agnosticism, Scepticism, Humanism, Pragmatism, Modernism, and Authoritarianism. An exclusive religion is not an answer either. It will further divide humanity and lead to conflict. The Semitic religions—Judaism, Christianity and Islam are exclusive religions.

The Jews first invented the myth that only one religion could be true. As they, however, conceived themselves to be the 'Chosen People' they did not feel a mission to convert the whole world.² Judaism is therefore exclusive but not missionary. Christianity, on the other hand, is both exclusive and missionary. "Christian religion inherited the semitic creed of the Jealous God 'in the view of Christ as the only begotten son of God' and so could not brook any rival near the throne."³ Regarding Islam, Radhakrishnan says, that it is "the creation of a single mind and is expressed in a single sentence, There is one God and Mohammed is his prophet."⁴ It aimed at world domination. Its motto was 'conversion or subjugation'. As opposed to this "Hinduism takes its stand on a life of spirit and affirms that the theological expressions of religious experience are bound to be varied."⁵ Hinduism provides a model for

universal religion. It meets the requirement of men of different temperament and aptitude. Vivekananda also looks upon the Vedic religion as the most universal religion. The central theme of Hinduism is '*Ekam sat viprāḥ bahudhā vadanti*'—the one truth is manifested as many. or as Radhakrishnan puts it, "All the paths of ascent lead to the same mountain top."⁶ Or as Vivekananda says, to quote *Gītā*, "Whosoever comes to me, through whatsoever from, I reach him. all men are struggling through paths which in the end lead to me."⁷

Modern man wants a religion which is dynamic, open, free and spiritual. "We are waiting for a vital religion, a live philosophy, which will construct the basis of conviction and devise a scheme of life which men can follow with self-respect and creative joy."⁸ Like Vivekananda, Radhakrishnan believes in the plurality of religions. "The core of all religions is the same. Plurality is only external. It is misleading to speak of different religions. We have different religious traditions which can be used for correction and enrichment. The traditions do not create the truth but clothe it in language and symbol for the help of those who do not see it themselves."⁹ A true understanding of the spirit of religion leads to a deeper absorption of the truth of one's own religion. It is not *fusion* of all religions but a *fellowship*.

1. Radhakrishnan and Muirhead, Editors, *Contemporary Indian Philosophy* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1952) p. 254.

2. S. Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religion and Western Thought* (London: Oxford University Press, 1940) p. 10.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 324.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 339.

5. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Hindu View of Life* (London: George Allen & Unwin) pp. 88-89.

6. P.A. Schilpp, Editor, "The Religion of the Spirit and the World's Need, Fragments of a Confession" in *The Philosophy of Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan* (New York: Tudor Publishing Co., 1952) p. 77.

7. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989) Vol. I, p. 2.

8. S. Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life* (London: Oxford Univ. Press) p. 83.

9. S. Radhakrishnan, "Fragments of a Confession", p. 77.

This fellowship is possible because human being irrespective of country, caste, creed or sex are basically Spirits. Defining this spirit in man, Radhakrishnan says, "It is not the physical body or the vital organism, the mind or the will, but something which underlines them all and sustains them. It is the basis and the background of our being, the universality that cannot be reduced to this or that formula."¹⁰ This spiritual element is unitive and universal. Its intuitive realization or *Jñāna* or *Parāvidyā* alone can bring about love and universal brotherhood in everyone. This is the 'spiritual humanism'. Its doors are open to the entire human race, paving the way for a universal human culture which combines and assimilates the best of the Orient and the Occident, a broad all-inclusive creed which is truly relevant in this nuclear age.

Radhakrishnan is all praise for humanism, but he, like Vivekananda, is against humanism being a substitute for religion. People like the agnostics, rationalists, socialists and the sceptics, who find no solace in religion turn to humanism. Humanism aims at the social and economic well-being of man and a development of his personality and conscience. It aims at human values like fraternity, selflessness, courage, and discipline. It advocates inner discipline and a middle path which avoids self-indulgence on the one hand and excessive asceticism on the other. Radhakrishnan praises the revolt of humanism against ecclesiastical religion, with its dogmas, creeds, ritualism and superstition. He also commends its revolt against mechanization and industrialization of society where man is treated like a cog bereft of his spirituality and individual dignity. But man is not merely a social being. He cannot 'live by bread alone'. Plato and Aristotle, the founders of humanism in the West, were

aware of the fact that material gains and prosperity cannot satisfy the human soul. He is a spirit who wants transfiguration into the Divine. Religion alone can satisfy this spiritual need of man. It is by religion that he can ascend to a divine life and be at peace with himself. Humanism limits man to his finite existence and looks upon this world as an end-all. Man basically is a denizen of another world. His roots are elsewhere.

In ethics, humanism recommends the 'golden mean', but that is a very vague principle and cannot serve as a moral guide. Radhakrishnan queries, "What is the middle path between violence and non-violence? The difference between right and wrong is not quantitative but qualitative. Virtue is not mere balancing, but it is the spirit in man that discerns the virtuous and the spiritual personality which has this insight. Religious men are ever ready to sacrifice their lives at the altar of truth. A mere humanist can never do so. "The saints invariably overstep the boundaries....Socrates and Christ overstepped the boundaries.... All this is possible only if we do not sacrifice the mystical to the moral."¹¹ True morality requires a firm deep faith in the immortality of the soul and a deep conviction in the goodness of God. "Humanism lacks that indefinable touch, that *elān* of religion which alone can produce that majestic faith whose creativity is inexhaustible, whose hope is deathless, and whose adventures are magnificent."¹² A humanist cannot face death, unjust suffering and pain of despair. For that, a deep religious conviction is needed. Social reform, love of mankind, is a necessary part of religion but they cannot be equated. Religion is much more.

We can divide the interpreters of Hinduism into the *Īśīs* i.e., *Seers* and *Bhaktas* ;

10. *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 226.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 67.

12. *Ibid.*

and in a third category we would like to place people like Radhakrishnan who show great wisdom and erudition. Radhakrishnan is the most distinguished academic interpreter of Hinduism. It was he who gave a deep and concise interpretation of Hinduism to the West and showed the Western mind a glimpse of the integrative framework of Indian philosophy and Hinduism in a rational and scientific manner.

His schooling forced him to thoroughly examine his Hindu beliefs. It was something akin to Hume waking Kant from his dogmatic slumber. He writes in his *Essay* that going to a Christian Missionary school was both an enlightening and deeply charring experience. He continues, "By their (the teachers') criticism of Indian thought they disturbed my faith and shook the traditional props on which I leaned."¹³ This criticism had a salubrious effect on his philosophy and religion.

For him, religion in essence is a living contact with the ultimate Reality. It is an apprehension of something which is over and above the individual. Religious experiences, though, similar to scientific and artistic insights, are unique and autonomous. Vivekananda also looks upon religion as a matter of experience and not as a mere system of dogmas.

Radhakrishnan's spiritual idealism is based on the mystic experiences of the *Seers*, and his own. For him, philosophy is not based on speculation or theology, but it must have the seal of experience. He says, "...for my thinking had another source and proceeded from my own experience which is not quite the same as what is acquired by mere study and reading. It is born of spiritual experience rather than deduced from logically ascertained premises."¹⁴ These spiri-

tual experiences are rationally assimilated and explained by him. It is intuition which can lead to mystic experience, as it is direct and immediate perception. Radhakrishnan writes, "Strictly speaking, logical knowledge is non-knowledge, *avidya*, valid only till intuition arises. Intuition is experienced when we break down the shell of our private, egoistic existence, and get back to the primeval Spirit in us from which our intellect and our senses are derived."¹⁵ Again, he says, "Intuitive knowledge is not non-rational, it is not non-conceptual. It is rational intuition in which both immediacy and mediacy are comprehended."¹⁶ Intellect is one and continuous with intuition which is supra-rational.

In his philosophy *Jñāna* and *Bhakti* both are important, in it Brahman and God both are real. The former being transcendent and the latter immanent. The Absolute has infinite possibilities and this world and God are one of them. When the entire creation becomes divine, this world comes to an end. God is then absorbed in the Absolute.

Salvation for Radhakrishnan is a dynamic cosmic life and a total union with the Absolute. Liberation means enjoying the constant vision of God and engaging in divinization of the cosmos. He believes in the hierarchy of mystic souls, but in the final salvation the souls lose their individuality and merge in the Absolute. *Saccidānanda*, absolute Existence, Knowledge, Bliss, becomes explicit in the Cosmos. In the Advaitic ultimate analysis, the world along with God is within the realm of *Māyā* or Ignorance. The *darśana* (vision) of the various gods we have in *Bhāvamukha Samādhi*. But only in the *Advaita Samadhi* only pure unity remains. All gods and individuality vanish in the total absorption with the Absolute.

13. "Fragments of a Confession", pp. 3-82.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 10.

15. *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 146.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 153.

Radhakrishnan believes in the *Kośa* (sheath) Theory of the *Upaniṣads* in which the aim of creation is the manifestation of *Ānanda* or God. The five *Kośas* (sheaths) are matter (*Anna*), life (*Prāṇa*), perceptual consciousness (*Manas*), Self consciousness (*Vijnāna*), and bliss (*Ānanda*).

The full realization of the spirit or salvation is not possible in man until *saccidānanda* is manifested in the cosmos. A divine individual can emerge only in a divine cosmos. If the world remains evil and imperfect there can be no emergence of a divine personality. "In a true sense the ideal individual and the perfect community arise together."¹⁷ For Vivekananda *Mokṣa* is not dependent upon cosmic salvation, '*Aham Brahmāsmi*' (I am Brahman) is the *mahā-mantra*. But the soul in man is the same in all. There is no diversity or plurality, only pure unity.

A liberated man is always altruistic. He is forever engaged in transforming his fellow beings, in divinizing the cosmos. Compassion and love are the hallmarks of such a one. He suffers martyrdom for the love of all beings and for the fulfilment of the divine task. To him the division between himself

17. *Ibid.*, p. 115.

and others vanishes. He sees himself in all. In his *The Hindu View of Life* Radhakrishnan gives the example of Buddha who turned away from his own liberation and took the vow of never crossing over while a single being remained subject to sorrow and suffering. "Religion may start with the individual but it must end in fellowship."¹⁸ *Mokṣa*, far from being antagonistic to social well-being is not only conducive to it, but it forms its very basis. Bondage is a result of ignorance of the true nature of the Self. Once the real nature of the Self is realized, '*Tattvamasi*' (That thou art) dawns, liberation takes place. But the humanistic element is also very strong in Vivekananda. Love for God is expressed through service to mankind. We must see *Nārāyaṇa* (God) in *Narā* (man).

Radhakrishnan is an optimist. He foresees redemption and a life divine for the entire human race. "All individuals are destined to gain life eternal, for, as a Hindu text says, *We are children of immortality (Amṛtasya putrāḥ)*."¹⁹

18. J. H. Muirhead, *Contemporary Indian Philosophy* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1952) p. 476.

19. *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 115.

God is not only inside us ; He is both inside and outside. The Divine Mother showed me in the Kali Temple that everything is Chinmaya, the Embodiment of Spirit ; that it is She who who has become all this—the image, myself, the utensils of worship, the door-sill, the marble floor. Everything is indeed Chinmaya. The aim of prayer, or spiritual disciplines, of chanting the name and glories of God, is to realize just that.

—Sri Ramakrishna

The Buddha's Dhammapada

DR. YOG DHYAN AHUJA

The importance of the Dhammapada—one of the sublime spiritual scriptures of the world, is highlighted by Dr. Yog Dhyan Ahuja. The author is a professor of Philosophy at the Metropolitan College of Denver; Denver, Colorado, U.S.A.

THE conspicuous importance of the Buddha's *Dhammapada* as a fundamental text of Buddhism has been graphically emphasized in Hermann Oldenberg's words:

For the elucidation of Buddhism nothing better could happen than that, at the very outset of Buddhist studies, there should be presented to the student by an auspicious hand the *Dhammapada*, that most beautiful and richest of collections of proverbs, to which anyone who is determined to know Buddhism must over and over again return.¹

Believed to be the original utterances of Siddhartha Gautama, the Buddha, the *Dhammapada* has a prominence of its own. There is an aura of sublimity around the *Dhammapada* which makes it second to none among the Buddhist scriptures. The canon of the Theravada Buddhism (i.e., the School of Elders in Buddhism) is preserved in the Pali language in three compilations, termed collectively the *Tipitaka* (Sanskrit: *Tripitaka*), the Three *Pitakas* or Baskets. These are: *The Vinaya Pitaka*, on Discipline, consisting of five books; *The Sutta Pitaka*, containing the Discourses of the Buddha in five *Nikāyas* or collections, and *The Abhidhamma Pitaka*, a total of seven works on the Doctrine.

The *Dhammapada* is a part of the *Khuddaka Nikāya* which is, in turn, one of

the five *Nikāyas* or collections grouped under the *Sutta Pitaka*. The title *Khuddaka Nikāya* (Pali, *Khuddaka*; Sanskrit, *Kṣhudraka*, meaning small) suggests its being a collection of minor works. It appears, however, that regardless of their size, those texts which were not or could not be placed in other groups have been included in this compilation. The *Khuddaka Nikāya*, therefore, may be understood to be the supplementary collection.

The Pali *Dhammapada* consists of four hundred and twenty-three verses which do not happen to be uniform in metre or in the quantity of their lines. These verses are arranged under twenty-six different headings, the selections being named as various *Vaggas*,² i.e., classifications or chapters. The arrangement again is arbitrary as numerous verses do not strictly belong to the subject matter of the title under which they have been placed. There are numerous repetitions, partial and near complete, in the text of the *Dhammapada*.

The Chinese and the Tibetan versions of the *Dhammapada* have their agreements and disagreements with the Pali text. An English translation of the Chinese rendering was

1. Hermann Oldenberg, *Buddha: His Life, His Doctrine, His Order*, Trans. into English by William Hoey (Edinburgh; Williams and Norgate, 1882) pp. 194-95.

2. *Vagga*: (i) a class, troop, multitude, company, bribe, party. R. C. Childers, *A Dictionary of the Pali Language* (London: 1875) p. 545.

(ii) Collection (*Vagga*): Max Muller, *The Dhammapada: The Sacred Books of the East* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1924) Introduction: p. xl.

published by Samuel Beal in 1878.³ The total number of chapters in the Chinese work come to thirty-nine as compared to the twenty-six in Pali. This Chinese work, as described by Samuel Beal, is one of the four major renderings which could be called the *Dhammapada* in the Chinese language.

A Tibetan rendering of the *Dhammapada* discovered by Schiefner consists of thirty-three chapters and contains more than one thousand verses. Of these only one fourth have substantial similarity with the Pali text.⁴

Similarly, a collection of Buddhist proverbs in Kharoshti script and written in the first or the second century A.D. was recovered by John Brough and published in London in 1962 under the title of *Gandhari Dhammapada*.

Referring to the contents of the *Dhammapada*, almost half of these are estimated to have been culled from different ancient religious works, including Buddhist scriptures such as the *Therā Gāthā* and the *Therī Gāthā*, as well as the *Upaniṣads*, the classical epic *Mahābhārata* and the law book, *Manu Smṛti*.

The dating of the *Dhammapada* is linked with the time of the compilation of the Pali canon. The famous Buddhist scholar Buddhaghosha, maintains that the Buddhist scriptures were given their final shape at the First Council, held immediately after the death of the Buddha around 477 B.C., and this is the view commonly held by the Buddhists. The *Milindā Panhā*, which belongs to the beginning of the Christian era, contains explicit mention of the *Dhammapada*. There are numerous quota-

tions from the *Dhammapada* in the *Katha Vatthu* attributed to Tissa Moggaliputta (Sanskrit, Tishya Maudgaliputra, fl. 242 B.C.). It is said that *Appamadavaggo*, a chapter of the *Dhammapada*, was recited to King Ashoka (259-222 B.C.). Modern scholars, however, hold the view that in its prevalent form the Buddhist canon was formulated sometime after the Second Council held in 377 B.C. and before or during the Third Council in 242 B.C.

F. Max Muller concludes his discussion about the date of the *Dhammapada* with the following remarks:

I cannot, therefore, see any reason why we should not treat the verses of the *Dhammapada*, if not as the utterances of Buddha, at least as what were believed by the members of the Council under Ashoka, in 242 B.C., to have been the utterances of the founder of their religion.⁵

There are some dates significantly worthy of note in this connection. While accepting 557 B.C. as the year of Siddhartha Gautama's birth, his *Nirvāṇa* took place in the year 477 B.C. as also the First Council at Rajagriha, under Kaśyapa, Ānanda and Revata in 377 B.C. Ashoka's reign lasted from 259 till his death in 222 B.C. He is known to have converted to Buddhism in 256 B.C. The Pali canon is believed to have been consolidated, at the latest, under Tishya Maudgaliputra in 242 B.C. In 420 A.D. Buddhaghosha compiled his commentaries on the Pali texts.

Among the books attributed to Buddhaghosha is also the work *Dhammapada Atthakathā*,⁶ the commentary on the *Dhammapada*.⁷ Buddhaghosha is well known as the author of the encyclopedic work in

5. *Ibid.*, pp. xxxiii-iv.

6. *Atthakatha*: Sanskrit *Arthakatha*, i.e. commentary.

7. For some of the other commentaries, etc., see Max Muller, *The Dhammapada*, *loc. cit.*, p. x, Introduction footnote.

3. *Dhammapada with Accompanying Narratives*, Trans. from the Chinese by Samuel Beal: First Published 1878; third edition (Varanasi: Indological Book House, 1971).

4. Vide Max Muller, *The Dhammapada*, p. lx.

Pali entitled the *Visuddhimagga* and numerous other books. However, in language and style the *Atthakathā* differs from his other authentic writings. Consequently, the scholars in general are not inclined to accept the validity of his authorship of this work. The difference of language and style, though, has been also attributed to the variation of the subject matter.⁸

Dhammapada and the Pali Studies

The first important work in Pali studies by the western scholars was Clough's *Pali Grammar* which appeared from Colombo in 1824. He was followed by George Turnour whose edition of the complete text of the historical work *Mahavansha*, or the *Great Chronicle of Ceylon*, was published as early as 1837. In 1855 Professor Vincent Fausboll brought out his Latin edition of the *Dhammapada*. While discussing the 'discovery of Pali', Dr. T.W. Rhys Davids⁹ considers Professor Fausboll's edition of the *Dhammapada* with its Latin translation to be of 'utmost service' and as the 'second landmark in the story of our knowledge of Pali', the first place being assigned to George Turnour. The earliest lexicographical work in this language, R.C. Childers' *Pali Dictionary* was published in 1875. The *Dhammapada* became the first religious text to be translated from Pali into a western language.

The interest of western scholars in Pali literature has been growing ever since. Max Muller shares the view with other scholars that the most favourite Pali text seems to have been the *Dhammapada*.¹⁰ Some of the

renderings of the *Dhammapada* in various western languages may be enumerated as follows: In English by Max Muller (1881), James Gray (1881) and F. L. Woodward (1935); in French by Fernand Hu (1878) and R. M. de Maratray (1931); in German by A. Weber (1860), Leopold Von Schroeder (1892), K. E. Neumann (1893), Walter Mark Graf (1912), Dahlke (1919) and L. Otto Frankle (1923); in Italian by P. E. Pavolini (1908); in Latin by Professor Vincent Fausboll (1855) and in Polish by St. Fr. Michalski-Iwienski (1925), among others.

Suriyagoda Sumangala Thera's edition of the Pali text in Roman script was published in 1914.

The Title

The title *Dhammapada*, a combination of two words—*Dhamma* and *Pada*—like certain other Buddhist terms, is not free from ambiguity. *Dhamma* is the Pali word for *Dharma* in Sanskrit which, in its older form, appears as *Dharman* in the *R̥g Veda*. *Dharma* has several significations such as doctrine, duty, virtue and religion. In Buddhism the term '*Dhamma*' has a diversity of meanings. Although in general, it may signify the Buddhist Doctrine or Law, or the duty of a Buddhist, it may also be interpreted as 'the religious text', 'quality', and also 'form'. Oldenberg observes that:

The word *Dhamma*, 'order', 'law', usually signifies in Buddhist terminology, 'essence', 'idea', insofar as the essence of anything constitutes its own immanent law. Thus the word is also used as the most general designation of the doctrine or truth preached by the Buddha.¹¹

It appears pertinent to study some of the contexts in which the word *Dhamma* occurs

8. 2500 Years of Buddhism, General editor, Prof. P.V. Bapat (Delhi: Publications Division, Govt. of India, 1964) p. 190.

9. T. W. Rhys Davids, *Buddhism*, (New York, London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1896) pp. 47-48.

10. Max Muller, *The Dhammapada*, Introd. p. x.

11. Hermann Oldenberg, *Buddha: His Life, His Doctrine, His Order*, English Trans. by William Hoey (Edinburgh: Williams & Norgate, 1882) p. 250, footnote.

in the *Dhammapada*. The word *Dhamma* implies elements of being, or forms, for instance in the statement that "All the *Dhammas* are non-Self." (Verse no. 279). In the two expressions that follow, the word '*Dhammas*' apparently signifies qualities or virtues: "The *Dhammas* of the good, never grow old." (Verse 151) and "Of the *Dhammas*, freedom from attachment is the best" (273). One of the verses of the *Dhammapada* exhorts: "Do not pursue the *Hina* (ignoble) *Dhammam*"¹² (167). Evidently the word *Dhamma*, in these instances, stands for principle, way of life, or doctrine.

The words '*Dhammam Sucharitam*' occur in two verses that succeed the above and may be translated as: *Sucharitam*, that is, virtuous and *Dhammam*, that is the Doctrine.¹³ In the examples that follow the term *Dhamma* expressly conveys the sense of doctrine: "One who violates the *Dhamma*" (176); "Superhuman delight comes from the discernment of *Dhamma*" (373); "He who imbibes the *Dhamma* lives in happiness with a serene mind" (79); "On drinking the nectar of the love of *Dhamma*" (205) and "On hearing the *Dhammas*" (82).

There are several other verses in which the word *Dhamma* seemingly has been used in the sense of the Doctrine. To quote one of such instances: "Those who follow the *Dhamma* after the *Dhamma* has been well-preached to them, go over to the other shore beyond the dominion of death, which is difficult to cross" (86).

A clear illustration of the word *Dhamma* in the traditional Buddhist sense of Doctrine occurs in the verse: "He who takes refuge with the Buddha, the *Dhamma*, and the *Sangha* (the Order), perceives the four *Aryan* (noble) truths with clear wisdom" (190).

12. Max Muller translates it as (evil) Law.

13. Max Muller translates these as laws of Virtue.

The same interpretation of *Dhamma* finds support also in the various combinations of this word: *Dhammattham* (217) or *Dhammattho* (256) that is one established in the *Dhamma* or the Doctrine; *Dhammadharo* (occurring twice in 259), that is the guardian of the *Dhamma* or the Doctrine; *Dhammagata* (297), one with thoughts set on the *Dhamma* or the Doctrine.

Similar to *Dhamma*, the word *Paḍa* also has diverse interpretations. *Paḍa* may mean course, path, foot, base, position, body, portion, word, or verse. Of great significance in this connection, is the verse number 21, which asserts that *Appamādo* (non-'*Pamāda*', Pali or non-'*Pramāda*', Sanskrit), that is alertness, means the *Padam* or *Pada* of *Amṛta* (immortality) and *Pamādo* (Skt., *Pramāda*) or carelessness, is the *Padam* or *Pada* of death. Referring to the former part, Max Muller translates the sentence as "Earnestness is the path of immortality".¹⁴ Dr. P. L. Vaidya interprets these words as "Earnestness or zeal is the way to *Nibbāna* (immortality)".¹⁵ Dr. Radhakrishnan gives two different interpretations: "Vigilance is the path that leads to eternal life"¹⁶ and "Vigilance is the abode of eternal life."¹⁷

Again, in certain cases, the entire term *Dhammapada* has been interpreted differently by different scholars. These renderings include among others: 'Footsteps of Religion', according to Gogerly! 'The Paths of Religion' as translated by Spence Hardy;¹⁸

14. Max Muller, *The Dhammapada*, Introd. p. ix.

15. Dr. P. L. Vaidya, *The Dhammapada* (Poona: Oriental Book Agency, 1934) p. 55.

16. Dr. Radhakrishnan, *The Dhammapada* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1966) Introd. footnote, p. 1.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 66.

18. (i) Vide Max Muller, *The Dhammapada*. Introd. p. liii.

(ii) "Footsteps of Religion" by Sir Hari Singh Gour, *The Spirit of Buddhism* Calcutta: 1929) Introd. p. xii.

'A Path to Virtue' by Epiphanius Wilson ;¹⁹ 'A Line of the *Dhamma*' (i.e., Doctrine), or portion thereof as rendered by Trevor Ling ;²⁰ 'Steps in Teaching' by Smith ;²¹ 'A Step to Piety' by Vaidya²² and 'Religious Word or Utterances' by Bapat.²³ Juan Mascaro's translation bears the title, '*The Dhammapada, The Path of Perfection*'.²⁴ As Samuel Beal points out, the Chinese seemingly interpret the term *Dhammapada* as 'Scriptural Texts or Verses'.²⁵ The idea of religious utterances as the interpretation of the title *Dhammapada* is apparently favoured by R. C. Childers²⁶ and by Dr. T. W. Rhys Davids.²⁷

Discussing the wording of verses number 44 and 45, and D' Alwis' translation of a passage from Buddhaghosha's commentary, Max Muller observes that "The Path of Virtue, or Footsteps of the Law, was the idea most prominent in the mind of those

who originally framed the title of this collection of verses."²⁸

The two verses referred to above are given in their translation: "*Who will not pick up the well-taught Dhammapada even as a skilled person picks up the (right) flower ?*" These words are repeated, with slight variation, in (45): "*The disciple will pick up the well-taught Dhammapada even as a skilled person picks up the (right) flower.*"

The words '*Dhammapada*' in the above verses could as well be interpreted as 'religious verses'.

Rahula Sankrityayana²⁹ and Bhikshu Dharma Rakshita³⁰ both take the term in the sense of 'religious verses'.

Quite importantly, an interesting comparison has been made in a verse in the *Dhammapada* as under:

Better it is to recite Ekam Dhammapadam (a single word or line of the Doctrine) *on hearing which one finds peace, than to repeat a hundred Gāthās* (evidently implying a common śloka or verse) *made up of meaningless words* (102).³¹

The reading '*Dhammapada*' and its translation: 'a word or verse', have been given by P. L. Vaidya,³² Rahula Sankrityayana,³³ Bhikshu Dharma Rakshita,³⁴ and also by

(Continued on page 275)

19. Epiphanius Wilson, *Sacred Books of the East* (New York: Colonial Press, 1900) Introduction to the *Dhammapada*, p. 113.

20. Trevor Ling, *A Dictionary of Buddhism* (Calcutta: K. P. Bagchi & Co., 1981) p. 82.

21. F. Harold Smith, *The Buddhist Way of Life* (London: Hutchinson's University Library, 1951) p. 21.

22. Dr. P. L. Vaidya, *The Dhammapada*, p. 97.

23. Dr. P. V. Bapat, *2500 Years of Buddhism*, p. 18.

24. Juan Mascaro, *The Dhammapada: The Path of Perfection* (New York: Penguin Books, 1973).

25. Samuel Beal, *The Dhammapada*, Introductory Remarks: p. 1.

26. Childers, *A Dictionary of the Pali Language—Dhammapadam*: "A religious sentence, name of one of the books of the Tipitaka, body or portion of *Dhamma* (Dharma + Pada).

27. Dr. T. W. Rhys Davids & Dr. William Stede, *Pali-English Dictionary* (Surrey: 1925) pp. 171-74. Pada—a line or stanza of the *Dhamma*, a sentence containing an ethical aphorism, a portion or piece of the *Dhammapada*. In the latter meaning given as four main subjects...As name of person...title of a canonical book contained in the Khuddaka Nikaya.

28. Max Muller, *The Dhammapada*, pp. liv-lv.

29. *Dhammapadam*, Pali & Sanskrit with translation and commentary (Lucknow: 1965) p. 21.

30. *Dhammapada*, Pali with Hindi translation and commentary (Varanasi: 1968), pp. 27-28.

31. Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Dhammapada*, pp. 92-93 gives the reading as *Ekam Gāthapadam* for *Ekam Dhammapadam*.

32. P. L. Vaidya, *The Dhammapada*, p. 63.

33. Rahula Sankrityayana, *The Dhammapadam*, Pali and Sanskrit with commentary in Hindi (Lucknow: 1965) p. 48.

34. Bhikshu Dharma Rakshita, *The Dhammapada*, Pali with commentary in Hindi (Varanasi: 1968) pp. 71-72.

Ethical and Moral Values in Education

PROF. K. RAMA RAO

(Concluding Part)

The author's discussion on the methodology for imparting moral and spiritual values to the younger generation is concluded in this article.

Conscience—Not a Dependable Judge of Moral Issues

CONTRARY to commonly held belief, conscience or 'the inner voice' is not innate. It is acquired, but it can develop in one only in the midst of human society. The level of development of conscience is limited by the level it exists in any given society of which the child is a member.

Conscience can also be wrongly trained to become rigid, or it may die. The conscience of a religious or political fanatic tells him that his religion or political theory alone is the best. The conscience of a corrupt official or politician does not prevent him from misusing his position for selfish ends. Conscience cannot always help in solving all moral issues or resolving all moral conflicts. Only education in values and ideals can help where conscience may fail. How are values imbibed?

Values are acquired and interiorized through the process of *imitation*, *suggestion* and *identification*. Hence parents, teachers and others concerned with value development should expose children to worthy examples so that they may acquire the desirable values. They should also offer sympathetic guidance and valid reasons when correcting the child's behaviour. Any negligence here may result in stagnation of moral development. Such a child continues to depend on external advice and cannot acquire moral autonomy. Further, any cruel or harsh

treatment of children exhibiting immoral tendencies may also result in the child's hatred and aversion for the very values which are desired to be interiorized. Two well-known sayings in Sanskrit literature very nicely indicate the right process and attitude towards value development:

(1) *Śanaishanairvinīyante
tarjanaiḥ toṣanairapi
navāiva aśwāḥ kuśalairbālāḥ
capala cetasaḥ* *

(2) *Bālāḥ putro nītivākyopacāraihi
kārye kārye yatnataḥ śikṣanīyaḥ
lekhālagṇā yāmapātre vicitrā
nā sau nāśam pākakālepiyāti*

(1) Children's minds are fickle; parents ought to train them for character slowly but consistently, sometimes with threats and at other times with satisfactions—as in taming a young horse.

(2) Children should be taught in every way; in every type of action. Do we not see the figures etched in the wet clay of an unbaked pot even after the pot is burnt?

The harmonious combination of moral and spiritual education which the Ramakrishna Institute of Moral and Spiritual Education (RIMSE) of Mysore, has been implementing for its B. Ed. trainees over the past fifteen years, with some tangible results, will encourage other educational institutions to introduce *Secular Moral Education* as

part of their educational programmes. What should be the goals of such education? Let us consider some viewpoints currently held on the issue before we present our own:

I. John Wilson,¹ researcher at Oxford, has recommended for moral development five 'moral components' or abilities. They are self-explanatory:

- (a) Consideration for others.
- (b) An awareness of feelings in one's self and in others.
- (c) An ability to collect data (to solve moral issues)
- (d) An ability to take the right moral decisions.
- (e) A will to act on the decisions.

II. Nottingham Professor Kay Williams² lists 'Primary Moral Traits and Attitudes (P.M.T. & P.M.A.) as:

(a) P.M.T.—Making right moral judgments, postponing gratification of desire, treating other humans with dignity, and being flexible, creative and dynamic in moral decisions.

(b) P.M.A.—Rationality, altruism, autonomy and owning responsibility for one's (both right and wrong) decisions.

III. The Ministry of Education, Government of India, constituted a working group to review the teacher training programmes with a view to promote education in values. The Committee was of the view that education in values should be accomplished only through the existing school curricula and activities. It also suggested a list of moral and spiritual values to be developed, along

with values in physical education, emotional education, mental development and aesthetic development. (In our opinion these latter also form a part of moral education since they also dwell on grace; beauty, harmony, perseverance, impartiality, vision of beauty, and so on.) The Committee also recommended other values, including sincerity, faithfulness, obedience to what one considers the Highest, equanimity of mind and pursuit of the Ideals—the Deepest, Highest and Ultimate.

IV. The NCERT (National Council for Educational Research and Training) published a list of eighty-four values, most of which are mentioned already. A few others are: Secularism, and Respect for all religions, Universal Truth, Universal Love, Self-discipline, Purity, Common cause, and Valuing national and civic property.

V. The *Satya Sai Institute* has categorized virtues under five values, namely: *Satya*, *Shanti*, *Ahimsā*, *Dharma* and *Prema* (Truth, Peace, Non-violence, Dharma, and Love). Taking these as the basis, the DSERT, Karnataka, Bangalore, has attempted to re-list the eighty-some values of the NCERT under one or the other of the above heads. They have also suggested methods of teaching and evaluating techniques for a sample of the values in a book published by them designed for teacher-trainees at Elementary Education level.

The foregoing brief survey on current thinking tells us that education in values can be attempted through—

(a) broad moral principles, traits and attitudes

(b) basic values as goals supported by virtues, and secular, universal, moral and spiritual concepts.

The difference in thinking is limited to whether moral education should be attempted only through the existing school subjects

1. John Wilson: Director of Research, Formington Trust Research Unit, Oxford (Author of *Introduction to Moral Education*).

2. Kay Williams. Author of *Moral Education*, and Professor, Nottingham College of Education, London.

and activities, or through these as well as providing for separate periods allotted for values as a special subject.

The Association of Catholic schools in India and the DSERT, Karnataka, are for providing separate periods for the subject and they suggest also techniques of teaching and evaluation.

While there is full agreement on the necessity for education in values, the only hitch is how it should be accomplished. There are three approaches, besides the most important personal example of the teacher: They are—*Integrated*, *Incidental* and *Direct*. The first two have been there all these years. The Integrated approach consists in teaching values for concomitant learning through different school subjects and activities. The Incidental approach consists in advising and guiding children whenever they are found to be immoral. The most important shortcomings of these two approaches are—

(a) They do not set definite goals and employ only hit-and-miss tactics;

(b) They are neither consistent nor comprehensive either with respect to the subject matter covered by the programme or with respect to the children.

(c) Tangible results have not been forthcoming through them because neither teachers nor students take them seriously, as shown by experience.

Hence it is necessary to make use of the Direct approach in addition to the first two. It not only aims at definite and clear objectives, but helps to keep the other two approaches active and useful. Two important objections against the Direct approach are (1) that there is *not enough subject matter* for value education, and (2) that values can only be *'caught and not taught'*.

There is no substance in the first objection. Literature in its several forms in every

language, and the fine arts, culture, music, and so many other areas can provide enough material for value education for classes one to twelve. Philosophy, comparative religions and professional ethics may be useful sources for the higher levels.

The second objection also cannot stand, for two reasons:

(1) Many values have to be taught and cannot be left to be 'caught'.

(2) There is hardly any worthwhile value to be 'caught' nowadays in several sectors of our prevailing social environment.

The Direct approach is, therefore, inevitable and also feasible. Its goals can be fully secular. In our opinion it can be based on three important universal and eternal values and achieved through virtuous conduct. Besides these, there have to be some values for a successful national life and for world citizenship.

The chart (*overleaf*), indicating broadly the goals in value education, serves also as a guide for content in the subject. Any one of the items can be chosen and used in the Direct approach, bringing illustrations and examples from life situations, stories, biographies and such other sources. Besides, certain units among the existing school subjects and activities can be used to achieve these ends. Literature of all kinds—poetry, prose, drama, stories, biographies, parables, *slokas*, proverbs and real-life situations can be used in the Direct approach.

Besides co-curricular activities, certain other special activities such as moral-cum-spiritual retreats, discussion of issues involving moral questions, social services like tree-planting, slum-clearance, road construction or repairing, visits to places of worship, visits to patients in hospitals, debris removal, wiping off useless writings on the walls, School campus cleaning and many other

DHARMA (as an intrinsic value) (for the pursuit of Eternal Values of)			DHARMA (as an instrumental value)
BEAUTY	LOVE	TRUTH	WORLDLY VALUES
1. Exercises for securing health and beauty of the body.	1. Sympathy, Kindness, Charity & related virtues.	1. Sincerity, honesty, Truthfulness, Faithfulness, and related virtues.	1. Capacity for moral decisions at national and international levels.
2. Healthy habits in eating, drinking, reading, and speaking.	2. Nobility, Magnanimity, and related virtues.	2. Duty, responsibility, Dignity of labour, & related virtues.	2. Concern for equality, freedom, national integration, international brotherhood and safety of public property.
3. Cleanliness Orderliness, Discipline of mind and body.	3. Altruism, Service, Self-sacrifice.	3. Loyalty, Gratitude, Patriotism, Courage.	3. Concern for purity of the environment and prevention of its pollution.
4. Obedience to rules, respect for elders & humility.	4. Brotherhood: (family, society, National, International).	4. Democratic spirit, self-reliance, self-respect, Love of peace, & related virtues.	4. Concern for ecological balance everywhere & Protecting civic & National property.
5. Ability in cultural aspects & appreciation thereof.	5. Impartiality in Justice, & equanimity of mind.	5. Scientific temper & moral thinking.	5. Concern for world peace & Secularism.

activities can be employed to evoke and develop civic consciousness, moral consciousness and devotion to duty.

The list of goals in the table can be used in a hierarchical fashion; those in the first column mostly for the elementary school level and those in the succeeding columns for the higher classes. The table can be used as a basis for framing a syllabus in value education for any standard or any

stage of school education. The same virtue can be taught in different standards using new illustrations. The table is not sacrosanct. The other sources mentioned earlier may also be utilized in the Direct approach to value education.

Teaching Techniques in the Direct Approach

It is necessary to indicate at least briefly how a virtue, a story, or biography can be

dealt with in the Direct approach. Ramakrishna Institute of Moral and Spiritual Education has been using these materials in the following way. As a preliminary condition to value education through any approach it is necessary to keep the school environment—physical, intellectual and the emotional—conducive to moral development. This means healthy and clean physical surroundings, healthy and happy relationships between students and teachers, and between teachers and the head of the Institute. These things are absolutely essential for any education in values.

Techniques Used by B. Ed. Trainees at RIMSE

The Direct approach at RIMSE consists of three teaching-learning techniques:

- (1) Learning through reasoning—Inducto-deductive
- (2) Learning through discovery
- (3) Learning to be and become—an activity-approach

(1) *In learning through reasoning*: The following sources are made use of: Moral principles,³ stories, biographies and commonly known virtues. Just a brief description of the steps in a lesson on virtue is given:

After a brief introduction appropriate to the particular virtue to be examined: (a) Its meaning is recalled and discussed through examples; (b) Its necessity, and the consequences to the individual and society if there were an absence of the virtue, or if the opposite of the virtue were to be practised; (c) Problems and difficulties faced in

the cultivation of the virtue are elicited from the class, followed with discussion about how those can be overcome; (d) Assignments are given appropriate to the virtue—to give illustrations, anecdotes, applications in life and so on.

In dealing with biographies, the difficulties faced by the hero in his/her life, in practising and implementing the values he/she cherished, the contributions he/she made to mankind or to the nation are narrated, bringing in, at the same time, questions drawn forth on how in any difficult situation ordinary people would behave compared with how the hero reacted to it in an exemplary manner and proved his worth.

(2) *In the Discovery approach*: The following sources are made use of: Life situations (observed personally and reported in the newspapers), proverbs, parables, *slokas*/poems, prose pieces.

After a brief introduction based on the value or virtue implicit in the subject matter the following steps are followed for poems, prose pieces and parables: (a) Reading aloud by the teacher, (b) Giving the meaning of difficult words appropriate to the context, (c) Putting one or two central questions to discover the value implicit, (d) Silent reading by pupils and answering the central questions, (e) Supplementary questions for elaboration of the content and (f) Oral reading by a few pupils and an appropriate assignment.

(3) *In the Activity approach*: Students are given an activity mentioned before, and the teacher guides them and supervises. The students are informed of the activity well in advance and a workable plan is prepared by the teacher in consultation with the head of the institution and others concerned and then executed. The results are evaluated and a report prepared mentioning the level of its success and the problems faced, etc.

3. A few moral Principles: (a) *Paropakārah punyāya pāpāya parapīdanam* (b) *Dharmo rakṣati rakṣitah* (c) Never does hatred cease by hatred; hatred ceases by love. (d) Happiness comes to him through whom happiness goes to others.

Spiritual-cum-Moral Retreat as an Activity

In the 'Activity approach a spiritual-cum-moral retreat may be organized for a period of one to three days, during which time the participants live a community life observing complete silence except during free time, games and in *śramadān* (working sessions). The programme consists of:

(1) Talks on great personalities in science, government, religion and social service. At the end of each talk there is a brief question and answer session.

(2) Prayer and meditation.

(3) Study and reflection.

An Evaluation Poll

It will not be out of place to mention here in tabular form the reactions of high school pupils to the moral education lessons they were exposed to. A study was undertaken by the author through a questionnaire distributed to about 150 students consisting of both boys and girls (approx. 50% each). Their responses to some of the specific questions were as given below:

1. Reasons for their liking at least some moral lessons:

- (a) created interest in morality ... 93
- (b) contained some moral for daily life ... 100
- (c) helped to think of my future ... 79
- (d) helped to think of an ideal for life ... 83

2. Reasons for their liking the activity lessons:

- (a) taught me dignity of labour ... 45
- (b) it was a nation-building activity on a small scale ... 40
- (c) taught me how to cooperate with others ... 70
- (d) made me realize the strain in manual work ... 44

- (e) helped me to understand human feelings ... 60

(The number of responses to question two was low because activity lessons could not be organized in some schools for some unavoidable reasons.)

3. Reasons for moral education to be a separate subject, in their opinion:

- (a) not all morals can be taught at home or can be caught ... 79
- (b) can make me a better person ... 96
- (c) can help eradicate social evils ... 85
- (d) doubtful whether effective moral education can be done through other subjects alone ... 57

To the question to mark their order of preference in the subject matter for moral education, the following were the responses:

Biographies	95	Parables	39
Stories	87	Poems	36
Virtues	68	Ślokas	31
Life-situations	44	Śramadan	17

To the question as to some of the benefits they derived from moral lessons the responses were as noted below:

Love of the nation	106
Better thinking ability	91
Better study habits	86
Better conduct	80
Will-power to avoid evil habits & unbecoming acts	70

A few other helps and benefits not mentioned in the questionnaire, but stated by pupils were:

- to face mishaps boldly
- love for the poor
- to become like Gandhiji or Bhagat Singh
- to develop dignity of labour
- to avoid over ambition
- not to waste materials

One more question that arises in the teaching of value development is whether it can be or should be evaluated. There can be two types of evaluation in this subject. They are (examinations of) (a) Knowledge of values, and (b) Moral behaviour.

The former is like any other subject and can be evaluated through objective questions or/and short answer questions on the meaning of moral terms, concepts, principles, stories, biographies and other material.

The second, moral behaviour, is not only difficult to evaluate but data can only be collected through direct observation (not being noticed by the individual) and through the maintenance of anecdotal records. Even after noticing an immoral or wrong beha-

viour it should not be used for penalizing the individual. Such records have to be used only for tendering advice and guidance.

The best instrument for testing morality is one's own process of moral development flowering into full autonomy.

Whatever is being done in moral education by the B. Ed. trainees of RIMSE, Mysore, is appreciated by the teachers and heads of the different schools. Syllabi are prepared in *Moral Education* for the eighth, ninth and tenth standards so as to provide adequate material to the trainees. There is still a lot of scope for improvement in this field. It is our sincere opinion that the Direct approach can be used for effective education in ethical values. This is supported by the students also as reflected in their reactions to the questionnaire.

THE BUDDHA'S DHAMMAPADA

(Continued from page 268)

Max Muller,³⁵ who discusses the difficulty of accepting the translation as 'sentences', but does not reject the soundness of its meaning in the singular, that is, 'a word' or 'a line'.³⁶

As it is, the *Dhammapada* is the *Dhammapada*, a scripture enjoying a distinction of its own. In the literature of the world, its universal appeal entitles it to a place of exalted prestige. For the Therāvāda Buddhists it is the embodiment of their Master's teachings. Reading the *Dhammapada* is next to hearing the sacred word from the Lord himself. As Oldenberg observes, "The proverbial wisdom of the *Dhammapada*

gives the truest picture of all the Buddhist thought and feeling."³⁷ From the earliest times all the Buddhists in general, and the Theravadins in particular, have considered the *Dhammapada* as a most revered manual of their faith. The regular chanting of the verses from the *Dhammapada* forms a most sacred tradition in Buddhism. In several countries, particularly in South and Far East Asia, countless monks wearing yellow or yellowish brown robes as well as numberless lay persons still memorize and recite with all reverence, a part or all the four hundred and twenty-three verses of the *Dhammapada*, thus keeping alive a practice which started back in history, some two thousand five hundred years ago.

³⁵. Max Muller, *The Dhammapada*, p. 31.

³⁶. *Ibid.*, p. lv.

³⁷. Oldenberg, p. 219.

REVIEWS & NOTICES

RAMAYANA—From the Original Valmiki, by Makhanlal Sen, Published by Rupa & Co., New Delhi, 1989. 711 pages plus vii, Price Rs 95/-.

Despite the fact that Indian society has undergone many changes since the times that the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata* were first composed, the two epics continue to fascinate human minds. As the author of the book under review says in his excellent introductory chapter for those who wish to understand the complex socio-cultural life pattern of even modern India, our epics are of immense help.

The book under review is the English translation of the Sanskrit *Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa* and, as claimed by the publishers, it is supposed to be the only authentic English translation. Translated in 1927, the present book is the first paper-back edition. It is a slightly abridged version of the original.

Although one cannot find fault with the translator's knowledge of the English language, the syntax has suffered in many places, particularly where dialogues are presented, due perhaps to an attempt at literal translation. Any attempt at literal translation, and specifically that of a poetical work, diminishes the beauty of the original and fails to express the idiom and subtle nuances well. A literal translation of a succinct language like Sanskrit is an extremely hard task.

The footnotes provided by the author are interesting. He is at considerable pains to prove that the *Vānaras* were not monkeys and apes, but local tribesmen, and that *Jatāyu* was not a bird but a tribal decorating himself with feathers! He tries to prove that there were no two distinct races like the Aryans and Dravidians. He thoroughly disapproves of *Vibhishana's* character and considers him a disgrace to his race!

The translator is a Bengali. The Bengali language does not have the equivalent of the letter 'v'. Therefore, proper nouns with 'v' have been transliterated as 'b'. For example, Vali is mentioned as Bali. While this is understandable, inexplicably the Sanskrit 'b' has been changed into 'v', and as a result *Kubera* becomes *Kuvera*.

The book contains innumerable printing errors. More glaringly, in places, large parts of a sentence are missing. Unpardonably, there is a printing error even on the front cover, and the title reads *Valimiki Ramayana*. A voluminous and valuable book such as this should have been bound with greater care. The pages come apart even after a single perusal.

To those who do not know Sanskrit the book will be a useful source to help know the contents of the original *Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa*. We hope the errors pointed out will be corrected in the next reprint.

Dr. Kamala S. Jaya Rao

WORDS OF THE MOTHER, PART 1 AND PART 2. Published by Aurobindo Ashram, Sri Aurobindo Books Distribution Agency, Pondicherry, 605002 1989. Pages 134 and 143. Price each: Rs 18.

In a spiritual journey one has to walk all alone towards the goal. A Guru will indicate the direction and will occasionally remove obstacles in one's spiritual progress. But individual efforts are of prime importance. A spiritual aspirant has to cleanse his mind of all the dross, and burnish it, so that it can catch the reflection of the Brahman. The company of holy men is of great help for a spiritual seeker. But many may not be fortunate to have such company. They have to satisfy themselves with books containing their wisdom. The words of sages can boost the courage of a seeker of the Truth. That is why such words are treated as *Āpta-vākyas*. An *Āpta* is one whose words are worthy of belief and who is an authority.

The present collection, *Words of the Mother*, is of the category *āpta-vākya*. It is a fine collection of stray sayings of the Mother of Aurobindo Ashram. It is classified and arranged for the benefit of spiritual aspirants. *Part One* is subdivided into three sections: (I) 'Man's Relationship with the Divine'; (II) 'The Path of Yoga'; and (III) 'Elements of Yoga'. The second book, *viz. Part Two*, consists of (I) 'Difficulties'; (II) 'Human Relationships'; (III) 'Work'; (IV) 'Parts of Beings'; and (V) 'Miscellaneous Subjects'.

It will thus be seen that the range of *Words of the Mother* is quite wide. Mother herself had led the life of deep meditation and experienced fulfilment. Her words indicate this. Her words, very pithy and full of wisdom as they are, echo the eternal truth at various levels. A few examples will make this clear:

"Refuse to do anything whatsoever which leads you away from the Divine." (Part two, page 25); "God gives Himself to His whole creation; no one religion holds the monopoly of His grace." (Part two, page 87); "Talk as little as possible, work as much as you can." (Part two, page 66); "Do not pretend—be: Do not promise—act; Do not dream—realize." (Part one, page 44); "You can be entirely free from fear, when you have driven out all violence." (Part two, page 193); "Do not mind the stupidity of others, mind your own." (Part two, page 36).

As one reads on through these pages, one is reminded of the sayings of the Holy Mother, Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. This is not strange, for has not Sri Ramakrishna said that 'all jackals howl in the same tune.'?

Both the books contain glossaries of Sanskrit and other terms used, and there is a biographical sketch of the Mother. The get-up and printing are good and simple. Readers will enjoy and benefit spiritually, browsing through them.

Dr. Narendranath B. Patil

BHIKSHUGITA, THE MENDICANT'S SONG, by JUSTIN E. ABBOTT. Published by Samata Books, 10 Kamraj Bhavan, 573 Mount Road, Madras-500 006, 1989. Price Rs 45.00.

Among the eighteen *Purāṇas*, the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* occupies the most important and honoured place in the devotional literature of India. Eknath, an eminent Marathi Saint of the sixteenth century, made valuable contributions to Marathi devotional literature, largely in the form of commentaries, short philosophic works and *abhangas* (poetical compositions). Eknath is remembered even today for his piety and deep devotion to God. His first large work was his commentary on the eleventh *skandha* of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, known as *Ekanāthi*

Bhāgavata, and *Bhikṣugītā*, a commentary on the twenty third chapter of the same *skandha*. Originally there were sixty-two verses in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*. In it Sri Krishna instructs Uddhava on the spiritual life, citing the example of a rich miser, who being pressed by circumstances, turns to mendicancy and suffers immensely for his attempts to live an honest and pious life, and who, in the midst of all insults and persecutions, maintains perfect peace of mind. Saint Eknath expanded the sixty-two verses of the Sanskrit text into a thousand and four Marathi verses in which he fully develops his thoughts on the evil results of lust for wealth, and turning to the right way of approach to God.

The book under review, as commented upon by Saint Eknath, has been translated from Marathi into English by the Rev. Justin E. Abbott. It begins with the Sanskrit Text, followed by the English translation by Swami Tapasyanandaji of the Ramakrishna Math, Madras. This prepares the reader for the study of Saint Eknath's commentary. Justin E. Abbott, who had special love and fascination for oriental studies in general, and Marathi literature in particular, has translated the Marathi verses of Eknath into English with utmost care and facility.

The *Bikṣugītā* preaches a philosophy of life with special emphasis on the evil of avarice, on the virtue of controlling the mind, and on the *Bhakti-mārga*, with its essential love of God. Though essentially a work on the *Bhakti-mārga*, the reviewer feels that every serious minded person will find the work intellectually rewarding and emotionally satisfying. Be he of East or West, the reader will feel an inspiration for higher living to reach the spiritual ideals of life. Saint Eknath wished that the reading of his version of *Bhikṣugītā* might bring peace and tranquillity to those troubled by the turmoil of this earthly life.

The paper, printing and binding of the work are excellent. The glossary of Sanskrit and Marathi words, the life sketch of Eknath and the short note on *Bhikṣugītā* have enhanced the value of the book. Samata Books, Madras should be congratulated for presenting us such a splendid work.

Sri Ranjit Kumar Acharjee

GLIMPSES OF GREAT LIVES, By SWAMI TATHAGATANANDA. Published by the Vedanta Society of New York, 1989, printed in India, pp. 247, Rs. 40.

Glimpses of Great Lives is a collection of very brief biographical sketches of some great men of the world in the fields of religion, science and culture. It is rather a unique collection in that the author has collected his *Lives* from both India and the West, and among them one finds some men of letters, some of scientific achievement, artists, literateurs and humanitarians. The names: Albert Einstein, Raja Rammohan Roy, John Wesley, Sri Aurobindo, Pandit Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Lord Sri Krishna, Bhagavan Buddha, Friedreich Max Muller, Robert Browning, Mahatma Gandhi, Gauri Ma, and Madame Calve suggest the variety of the selections. Swami Tathagatananda mentions in his Preface that all were articles published in different periodicals in India before being collected for printing in this single volume. Nowhere does the Swami mention why he chose to write on so many different types of noteworthy personages, but one can after all appreciate that he has perceived the need of our times—the recognition of our one human family and recognition of nobility and human greatness without national, linguistic or religious-cultural consideration.

Browsing through these *Great Lives*, one becomes aware that not only greatness can be found in every nook and corner of the world if one chooses to look for it, but that greatness in human beings doesn't vary in quality from one society to another. One can feel reverence for the Divine Spirit on reading the life of John Wesley the same as for F. Max Muller, and for these two, a respect similar as for Pandit Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar and Mahatma Gandhi.

All considered, Swami Tathagatananda's collection of great lives is educative. Yet for more permanent value of the work, better editing and proofreading would have eliminated the few spelling and syntactic slips. Otherwise, one would wish there were more lives included and even more expansive treatment. The book is interesting reading.

Swami Sivaprasadananda

A SURVEY OF HINDUISM, By KLAUS K. KLOSTERMAIER. Published by The State University of New York Press, Albany, N.Y., 1989. 649 pages plus xvi, Price not given.

The book under review is obviously the outcome of many years of painstaking research. The author is a Professor in the Department of Religion at the University of Manitoba (Canada). He has written a lucid account of the multifaceted Hindu religious traditions with their vast interlocking philosophical dimensions—such as those embodied in the concept of *dharma*.

The book has two parts. Part One traces the philosophical background and historical development of Hinduism and identifies its essence. In so doing, the author gives a critical assessment of Hindu scriptures, viz. the *Upanishads*, the *Puranas*, the *Bhagavad Gītā*, the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata*. He cites relevant passages to demonstrate how the Hindus believe in one God and at the same time revere many gods.

Part Two gives a comprehensive survey of the three Hindu paths to liberation, viz. those of Work, Knowledge and Devotion. In the course of the discussion the author makes mention of countless sages, saints and prophets of India from time immemorial and how they realized truth through these paths.

The author analyzes incisively and illuminatively the complex religious life of the Hindus and its bearing on social, literary and mythological aspects. The numerous rituals and social practices rooted in the different doctrines of the various branches of Hinduism also get a good deal of attention. The observance of Hindu festivals and the worship of innumerable deities and saints also find a place in the book.

A Survey of Hinduism makes an indepth analysis of the Hindus' six systems of philosophical thought and highlights their importance. In the process, the author recognizes the great strength of Hinduism as lying in its capacity for accommodating and assimilating ideas from divergent source without surrendering its own intrinsic character. Hence the modern Hindu Renaissance is, as the author rightly shows, a regeneration of its basic strengths, brought

into focus by nineteenth and twentieth century contacts with the West.

Though carefully researched and cogently argued on the whole, the book has some factual errors. On page 87, Hanuman is described as the 'monkey king' which is only metaphorically true. On page 97, instead of Yudhisthira, Arjuna is described as the leader of the rightful claimants. Similarly, on pages 186 and 196, Vacaknavi Gargi is shown as one of the wives of the sage Yajnavalkya. In fact, Gargi was a daughter of sage Vacakna and one of the greatest of the *Upaniṣadic* seers. Balarama was not Krishna's younger brother (p. 280), but his elder brother. Finally, the years of birth of Sant Tukaram and Ramdas Swami should be 1608 A.D.

These are minor blemishes and do not greatly mar the value of the book.

With its elegant get up, numerous illustrations and very helpful bibliography, *A Survey of Hinduism* will be a valuable book for both the general reader and the specialist.

Swami Brahmasthananda

THE SILENT PATH by MICHAEL J. EASTCOTT; published by Rider, London, 1989; pp. 166; £ 4.95.

In a world torn by tensions, both voluntary and involuntary, individuals are bound to seek modes for their creative resolution. S/he would like not so much to repress as to recycle the manifest power behind these tensions. The process of recycling this tragically misdirected energy is intrinsic to meditative techniques. Hence the felt need for charts which, to use Paul Brunton's memorable words, "spiritualize and not sterilize" the apparently negative into the positive.

Here is one such map, a comprehensive introduction to the study of meditation which is, as the author rightly says, "an inner, silent, secret path which we carve out for ourselves." But, being secret does not mean there is something exotic (or something sordid as the die-hard Freudians would say) about it.

Viewed thus *meditation* is mediation, as Eastcott says, between what appear as binary oppositions: the body/mind, spirit/matter,

outer/inner. It is a dynamic interplay between the silent inner and the articulate outer, between the apparently cognising/experiencing 'I' and the silent/, witnessing 'Self'. Then, as the psychosynthesis idiom would put it, we become aware of the tremendous affirmation at the root of meditative techniques. "I *have* a body, but I *am not* a body; I *have* emotions but I *am not* emotions." In effect, once contraries are *seen* as mind-generated and not Self-based, we *see through* and *realise* ourselves to be centres of pure consciousness.

But, then, this requires what another writer has picturesquely called "minding the body and mending the mind." This would mean implicating the emotions, activating the will and above all chastening the intellect. It is what Eastcott calls "repolarizing the entire lower man". As such even what many people tend to regard as mere mechanics of meditation—a suitable place, regular time, the achievement of rhythm in practice, posture, mantra—play a crucial role. They "programme habits that develop spiritual life."

For this, clear awareness and right choice of the congenial path—among the many available—is necessary. As Eastcott frames them, we have the Reflective, the Receptive, the Creative Paths of meditation, buttressed, deepened and intensified by Invocation and Prayer. Here the role of mantra is crucial for, it is based, as the author rightly says, on the sound psychological principle that "through sound we factually affect the others, through word forms we house the potencies of thought." Above all, this is "no five-or fifteen-minutes process but belongs to the twenty-four hours of the day."

In short, on a subject which is increasingly eroded by the populist vagaries of consumer-oriented marketing, it is refreshing to come across the present book. Lucid and clear, and eminently pragmatic, *The Silent Path* (now in its third edition which is itself a pointer to its value) is marked by cool, passionless good sense. Reading it is itself an analogue to the meditative process and therefore it is indispensable for all those interested in the dynamics of inner transformation.

Dr. M. Sivaramkrishna

PRACTICAL SPIRITUALITY

SURRENDER yourself wholeheartedly to God. Take refuge in Him. Pray constantly with a pure, sincere heart: "O Lord, I do not know what is good and what is bad for me. I am entirely dependent on You. Grant me what I most need for the spiritual life. Take me along the path which will lead me to the greatest good. Give me the faith and strength constantly to remember You and meditate on You."

It is no easy thing to dedicate oneself heart and soul to the Lord. Many people boast: "I have surrendered myself and my all to God. I do only what He tells me to do." But if we observe their lives we see differently. For the good they do they claim the credit and they boast of their achievements; but when adversity or trouble overtakes them they cry out against the Lord and blame Him for their misfortunes.

We judge men by their actions, but God looks into their innermost minds. Be sure of this: God runs to him who prays with a sincere heart. Be pure in heart and always make your thoughts and lips one.

Only one in a million sincerely longs for God, and few sustain that longing. Therefore you must try to intensify that longing. Whatever you do, whether you are sitting, or lying down, or eating, or working, pray constantly: "O Lord, make me able to understand and receive that grace which I know You are ready to give me." Know that your time on earth is but short and that your real home is at the lotus feet of the Lord.

In his folly man will deny the very existence of God because of his own lack of

comprehension. He prefers to rely upon his own intellect, little realizing how unstable that intellect is. Even though what he accepts as true today he rejects as false tomorrow, yet he thinks that what appears as true to himself today is the final truth and must be accepted by all.

The Lord alone knows all the subtle ways by which a man may be deluded.

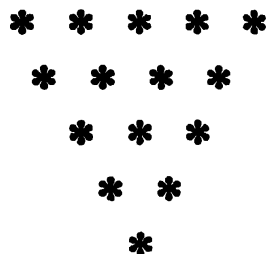
One who has known God does not limit Him. To him, God is not a matter of opinion: God *is*. He is boundless love and infinite mercy. He is beyond the grasp of the intellect. He who has realized God understands His mysteries. For him there is nothing hidden. The gates of knowledge are open, and he knows that he belongs to God even as God belongs to him.

Intelligence is but another name for ignorance, because its area is limited. Therefore, if a man wants to attain all knowledge and understand all mysteries, let him devote himself to the knowledge of God.

As children swing around a pillar in their play, holding tightly to it for their support, so must you hold fast to God—the Pillar of Life. Whichever path you follow, whether it be the path of work, or of devotion, or of knowledge, you will reach Him. Hold fast to the Pillar, and your life will be blessed, and you in turn will become a blessing to mankind.

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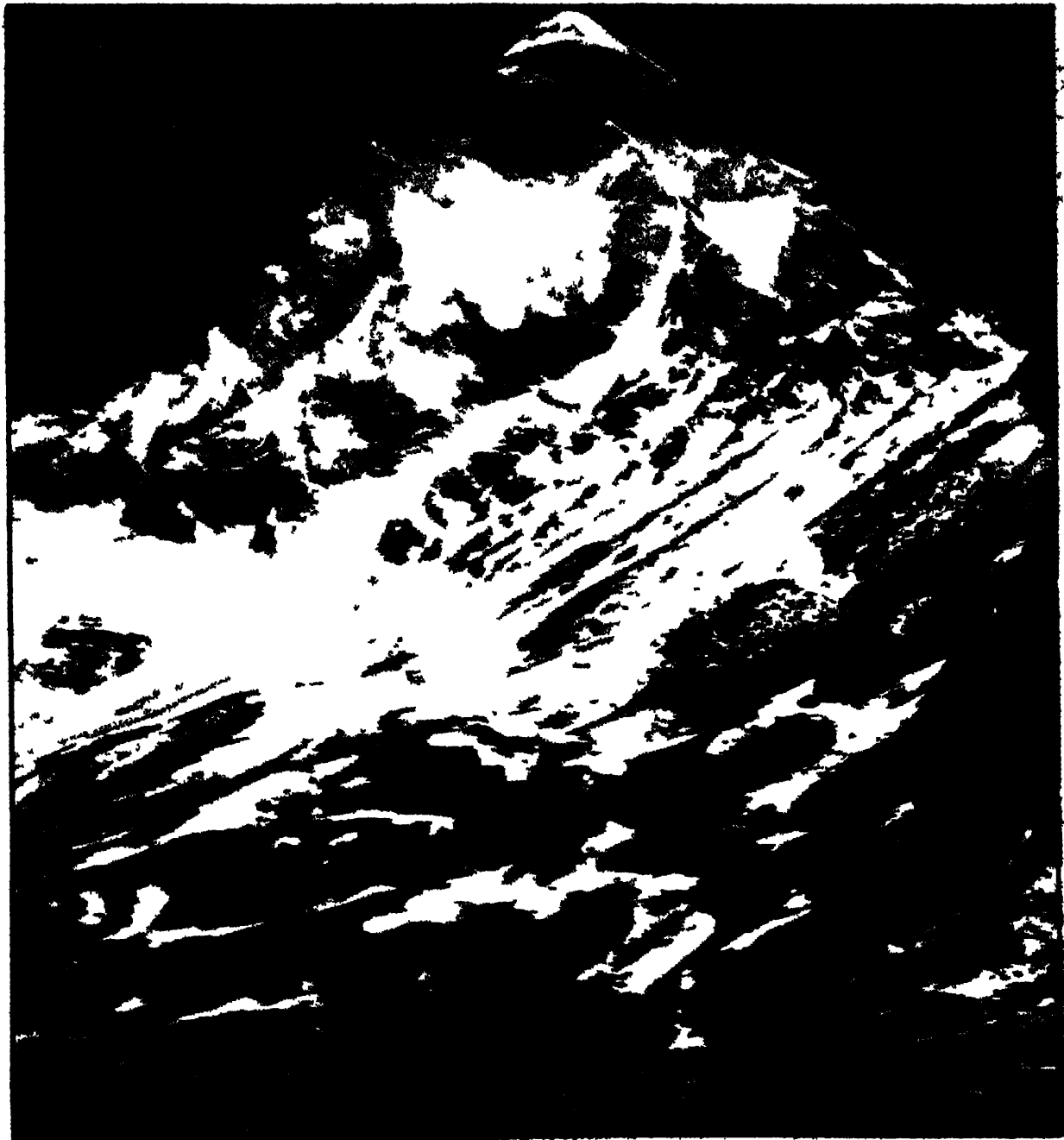
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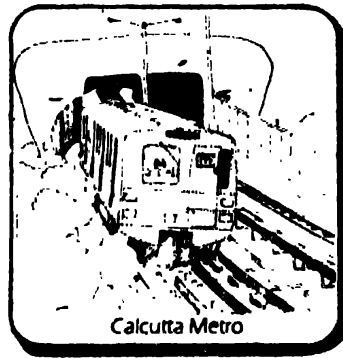


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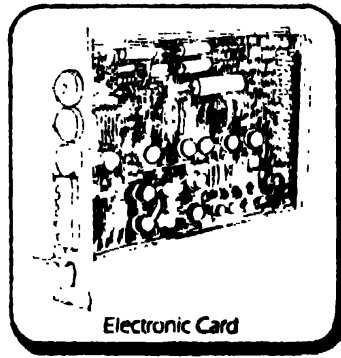


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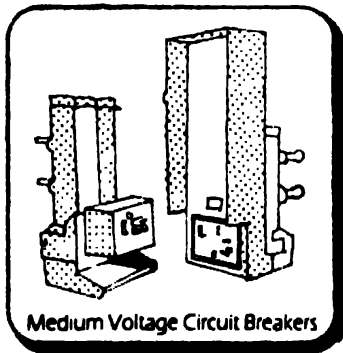
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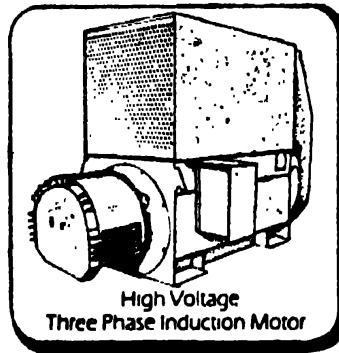
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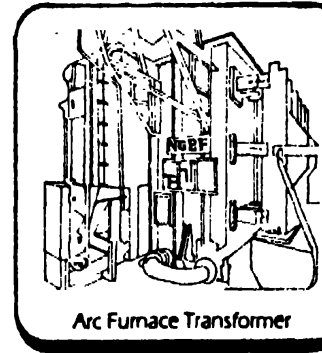
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—*Swami Vivekananda*

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AN APPEAL

Dear Friends,

You are already aware of the Ramakrishna Order started by Swami Vivekananda which is conducting Religious, Educational, Cultural and Philanthropic activities through its numerous branches spread over India and abroad.

The Pune Centre of this ORDER has been engaged in similar activities since its inception in 1984 with the kind co-operation of the generous public. We are grateful to them for this.

We have been feeling the want of spacious accommodation to house our Charitable Dispensary, Free Reading Room with a Library and our Administrative Office, to be of service to the needy in a better and more efficient way. Presently these activities are conducted in tinsheds, which are very inadequate.

To overcome this inconvenience, a plan has been drawn to construct a three storied building to conduct the above mentioned activities with some more expansion, like study facility to needy students, youth activities, etc. The whole structure, when complete, will have a floor area of approximately 6,000 sq. feet per floor, i.e., 18,000 sq. feet in all. The estimated cost for this is over Forty two lacs of Rupees (Rs. 42/- lacs) approx.

We wish to execute this work in a phased manner. To begin with, we wish to complete the ground floor for which an estimated amount of Rs. 15/- lacs is required. The remaining work will be taken-up as and when the funds are available.

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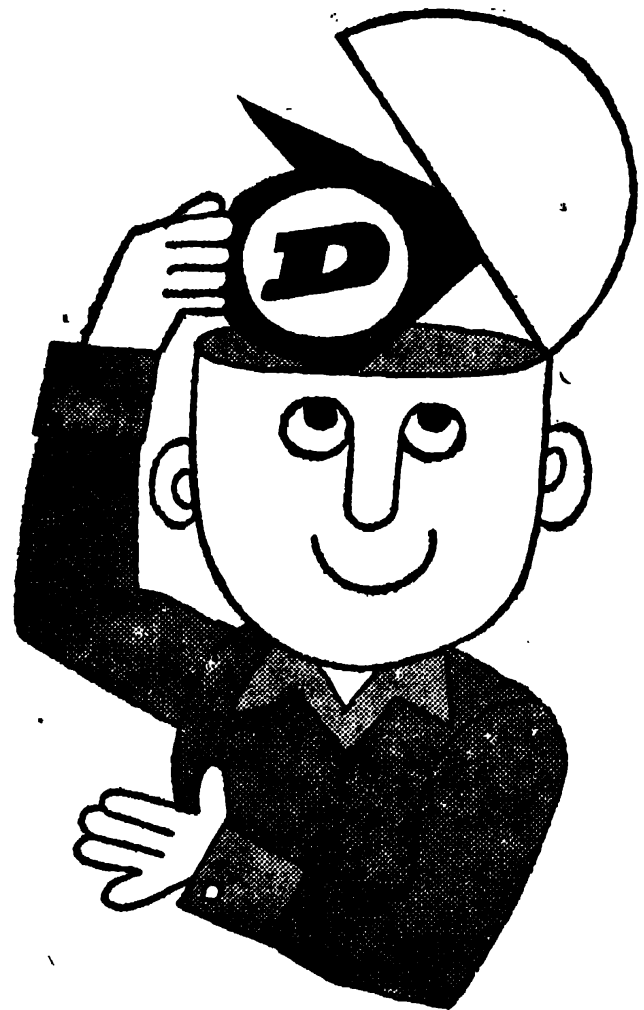
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Arise! Awake!
And stop not till the Goal is reached.

Prabuddha Bharata

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The Divine Message

In our servile attendance on the (wealthy) wicked, their shabby manners and talk we have somehow put up with ; suppressing tears that welled up from our hearts, we have smiled out of vacant minds ; obeisance we have made to dullards stultified by too much wealth ; in what more fooleries wouldst thou have me dance, oh Desire, thou of ungratified yearning!

What have we not endeavoured to do, with our depraved conscience, for the sake of our *prāṇas* (five vital forces) which are unreliable and compared to water on the leaves of a lotus, since in the presence of the rich, with their minds stupefied by the pride of wealth, we have shamelessly committed the sin of recounting our own merits!

We have forgiven, but not out of forgiveness (but out of our incapacity to right our wrongs) ; we have renounced the comforts of home life, but not out of contentment after satisfaction (but as an exile from home in quest of riches) ; though we have suffered inclemencies of weather, cold and heat so difficult to bear, still it is not religious austerities that we have undergone ; with subdued vital forces, night and day have we brooded on money and not on the feet of Śiva ; thus we have performed those very acts which the Munis (saintly recluses) do perform, but of their good effects we have deprived ourselves.

The worldly pleasures have not been enjoyed by us, but we ourselves have been devoured ; no religious austerities have been gone through, but we ourselves have become scorched ; time is not gone (being ever-present and infinite), but it is we who are gone (because of approaching death). Desire is not reduced in force, though we ourselves are reduced to senility.

The face has been attacked with wrinkles, the head has been painted white with grey hair, the limbs are all enfeebled ; but desire alone is rejuvenating.

Vairāgya Śatakam

Power of Words

SPEECH is the verbal expression of silent thought. The internal audible expression is word. Word and thought are inseparable. Speech is the vehicle which conveys our thoughts and feelings and thus builds a bridge of communication between human beings. The effective means of contact between two persons is speech. To express one's agreement or disagreement, annoyance or affection and so on, requires the medium of words. Our knowledge is preserved and built upon words. To accumulate and to transmit knowledge, communication is necessary. Knowledge, whether spiritual or secular, has to depend on some verbal structure. The scriptures of the world, though speaking in different languages, have the same thought and experience. Similar is the case with science and literature. Human pain and suffering, joy and pleasure are the same everywhere. But they are expressed in the myriads of languages differently. Science and technology have removed the barrier of physical distance between different nations, and as a result, the world has now become a closely knit society. Any new addition to human knowledge, new inventions or discoveries that are taking place all over the world, in no time become the common heritage of this united human society. Thoughts are translated into different languages so as to find their fruition in action. Therefore Thomas Mann, the famous writer went as far as to say that "Speech is civilization itself."

Without thought there cannot be word. And thought is not the exclusive property of any person or nation. On the other hand, language can be. But language is only an

external and inadequate symbol. Ironically, people neglecting the very essence attach much importance to these symbols and fight. India has become virtually a battleground over the issue of language. It is true that the mind becomes familiar, quite at home with the words and their meanings and phonemes of the mother tongue. It does not mean what is familiar is the superior. Then why this quarrel about language? The reason is not far to seek. The riddle lies in the human heart. Human beings, by nature, do not like anonymity, they want to be great and prominent. So, to them their culture, traditions, land and the language they speak are great. This superimposed greatness gives them a sense that they too are significant entities in the world. To establish their imaginary exalted status they coerce others to accept their own way of life and thinking. The moment a person says, "This is mine," he is attached to it.

Another arena of dissension is religion. Religious leaders instead of enlightening the minds and imparting ennobling truths to their followers, engage themselves in acrimonious quarrels over trivial things. "I like the silent church," wrote Emerson, "before the service begins, better than any preaching."¹ Whether the indwelling spirit is called Ātman, God, or Allah, or just 'Self' makes no difference to an earnest spiritual seeker. But these words and other external symbols mean a lot to idlers. Speech devoid of lofty thoughts is only thoughtless noise and uproar. There is more noise in the world than fruitful and purposeful speech. Barren, superfluous speech does more harm than good. Instead of soothing the bereaved hearts it stokes the

1. R. W. Emerson, *Essays* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1910) p. 45.

flames of disturbance and disquietude. "I have often," remarked the Greek philosopher Plutarch, "regretted my speech, never my silence." Confucius, who lived in the fifth century B. C. in China, was a lover of silence. One day he took his disciples on an excursion to a museum. There was a statue, and attached to the lips of the statue's face were three clasps with the words:—"The ancients talked little; it is good for us to imitate them; those who talk much are liable to say things that should not be said."

The progress of civilization is chaotic. If it has advanced on one side it has also receded with equal momentum on the other. For everything that is gained something is lost. Our modern way of life has brought much comfort and ease and has degenerated the nerves and muscles of the organism. It has brought burgeoning advance in the field of medicine, but sacrificed good health. Invention and dependence on the software have dimmed the sharp thinking faculty. Spectacular growth in technology has ushered in disastrous consequences on the delicate eco-system. Civilization has brought much opulence but also increased mental unrest and tension. Increasing reliance on the high-tech gadgetry has swallowed up the natural skills of people. Acquisition of new arts has created a hiatus between man and Nature. Outwardly people appear to have become polite and charitable, but inside there is still the savagery of greed and hatred, and these are being nourished by heightened sense enjoyments. So our progress is like the vigorously pedalled stationary exercise-bike used for physical fitness. A rider covers in a few minutes five kilometres but remains at the same place.

In modern civilization, words have assumed enormous significance. Attractive and lavish advertisements in magazines, and the commercials on T V and radio provide ample testimony. The tremendous power of print-

media and the drumbeats of propaganda are some of the indicators. There seems to be an urgency to commit everything—either ugly or beautiful, ridiculous or sublime, into words. Words, barren words, have taken the place of experience. Yet the persons concerned are unaware of this. People think they understand something; they feel something; yet there is no direct experience except memory and hollow words. Due to exhausting repetitiveness of words, as mounting scientific evidence suggests, mind loses its spontaneity and freshness.

It cannot be denied, at the same time, that words are responsible for the extensive knowledge about the external universe. People now know more about different cultures, traditions and ways of thinking other than their own because of rapidly increasing dissemination of literature and cultural exchange programmes. The precious thoughts of great people would have been lost to posterity in the absence of words. Mankind owes much to the records of history. But it is also irrefutable that some recorded words have been the cause for great resentment and tension in human society. In India, still, many quote from the ancient outdated texts to show that women are not entitled to freedom and equality, or to justify resurrection of the diabolic sati-custom, or to try to perpetuate the stupidity of untouchability. In many countries, even in these days of fast progressing civilization, people adhere unthinkingly to such ancient superstitions because their recorded texts perhaps condoned them centuries ago. Many heinous crimes get their support from different religious books. Misinterpreted words have wrought great danger and are still doing harm. "Even a devil can quote scriptures," is an old adage. "How every fool can play upon the word!" exclaimed Shakespeare in *The Merchant of Venice*. Inspired utterances of some great souls, despite many odds, have showered blessings on human society.

Buddha, therefore, laid great emphasis on right understanding (*sammādiṭṭhi* or *samyag dr̥ṣṭi*).

Proper understanding or wisdom can alone lead to right speech. In Buddha's *astāngika mār̥ga*—the eightfold noble path that leads to spiritual freedom, right speech or control of speech (*sammāvācā* or *samyag vāk*) is one of them. Right speaking consists of abstention from lying, slander, using harsh words, and frivolous talk. People go in search of peace of mind but they themselves disturb their peace by excessive garrulity. Most people think that they have a wonderful opinion on all matters and they must say something to parade their wisdom before others. Uncalled-for or untimely speech more often than not mirrors the ignorance of the speaker. Most of our speech is frivolous talk devoid of any serious basis in thought. Speech surely dissipates psychic energy. Perhaps people are unconsciously aware of this weakness, therefore, their span of attention and capacity to listen to others is limited. One common observation at all meetings, conferences and seminars is that people in an audience patiently hear a speaker for a few minutes and then become fidgety and start to strike up conversations with one another and create a din. People do everything to avoid dreaded silence. They go to solitary places to relax their taut nerves. Ironically, even there they carry portable radios, TV's and cassette players to escape from the stillness. Often what begins as a mild fruitful discussion before long turns into an ugly heated argument or exchange of accusations. The unbridled mind leads to uncontrolled speech. Thoughts of anger, hatred, or jealousy, if one patiently waits, appear and disappear of their own accord, if left to themselves. But once the formless thoughts take the concrete shape in words, then it becomes difficult to escape from their formidable consequences. People never for-

get, even after many years, unkind words spoken to them. Malevolent words excite one to do unwise acts and bring misery. Words uttered by a fanatic wreck havoc in society. On the contrary, benevolent words or words of wisdom lead a groping soul to love and light. Mind is vulnerable to the influence of words, both constructive and destructive.

Distrust and fear of the tongue was voiced by the Christian James, a member of the semi-Buddhistic *Essene* sect and contemporary of John the Baptist. He said:

But let every man be swift to hear but slow to act. If any man thinketh himself to be religious while he bridleth not his tongue, he deceiveth his heart, this man's religion is vain. So the tongue is a little member and boasteth great things. Behold how much wood is kindled by how small a fire. And the tongue is a fire: a world of inequity among our members is the tongue; which defileth the whole body and setteth on fire the wheel of nature, and is set on fire by hell. For every kind of beasts and birds, or creeping things, and things in the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind; but the tongue can no man tame: it is a restless evil, it is full of deadly poison.²

"Every idle word," warns the Bible, "that men shall speak, they give account thereof in the day of judgement."

Kind and well-spoken healing words have not only the power to draw people but also soften their hearts. Unkind and arrogant words cause revulsion in the mind and drive people away. A person with few, graceful and truthful words wins the goodwill of all. Everyone has an uncanny ability to detect whether a person speaks only from uncon-

2. D. Goddard, *The Buddha's Golden Path* (London: Luzac & Co., 1930) p. 38.

trolled habit or from the depth of his heart. Intense feelings and emotions do not require any artificial expression. When the heart is full the tongue is silent. In March 1911, Sri Sarada Devi stayed for about a week at the Ramakrishna Ashrama, Bangalore. Neither she could speak Kannada, the local language, nor could the people understand Bengali. Yet there was perfect understanding. One day she sat in the hall of the Ashrama surrounded by many devotees, in perfect silence as there was no verbal communication. When she expressed her anguish that a few words of hers could have given solace to the devotees, it was translated to the devotees present. They said in one voice, "No, no ; this is all right. Our hearts are full indeed. No words are needed on such an occasion."³ When one does not trust his heart he surrenders the reins to the unruly tongue.

"Fortunes and misfortunes, friends and foes reside in one's tongue," is not an extravagant statement. "Mend your speech a little," cautions Shakespeare in *King Lear*, "lest you may mar your fortunes." The Sanskrit poet goes a little further and states: "Prosperity is in the gift of words ; tongue makes relatives and friends ; by wrong use of words one slips into an inescapable trap ; death knocks at his door who is unwise in the use of words."⁴ Before one speaks one should be careful, otherwise later regrets will not mend the damage. Speech is a window to a person's character. One may be wealthy or powerful, but words uttered pierce all camouflage and reflect the true inner character. "One speaks as one thinks. If a man thinks of worldly things day and night, and deals with people hypocritically, then his

words are coloured by his thoughts. If one eats radish, one belches radish," says Sri Ramakrishna.⁵ The wise saying of Bhartṛhari is worthy of being remembered. He wrote: "Neither do bracelets, nor necklaces brilliant like the moon, nor bathings, nor the use of perfumes, nor flowers, nor decorated hair become ornaments to a man ; but it is speech with grace alone that adorns him. All other ornaments are destructible ; but the power of speech is an everlasting adornment."⁶

Some people boast that they are straightforward in speech, do not mince words and don't hesitate to speak boldly to the face of others what they feel. This is nothing but vanity. What they give to others will come back to them with compound interest. What goes out, ill or well, comes back to the sender—it is an inexorable law. People forget this and as an upshot suffer, blaming either their destiny or God. Talkative persons after doing some good to others go on for days bragging about it. Observing this weakness *Niti Śataka* states: "One should keep one's generosity a secret ; must extend cheerful hospitality to strangers arriving at one's doors ; should keep silent about the good he has done to others, but, on the other hand should proclaim among the people the benefits received from others."⁷ The French novelist Alexander Dumas put it nicely—

5. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, 1985) p. 686.

6. Bhartṛhari's *Niti-Śataka*—19

केयूरा न विभषयन्ति पुरुषं हारा न चन्द्रोज्ज्वला
न स्नानं न विलेपनं न कुमुमं नालंकृता मूर्धजाः ॥
वाण्येका समलंकरोति पुरुषं या संस्कृता धार्यते
क्षीयन्ते खलु भूषणानि सततं वाग्भूषणं भूषणम् ॥

7. *Niti-Śataka*—64

प्रदानं प्रच्छन्नं गृहमुपगते संभ्रमविधिः

प्रियं कृत्वा मीनं सदसि कथनं चाप्युपकृते ॥

3. Swami Gambhirananda, *Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, 1969) p. 248.

4. लक्ष्मीर्वसति जिह्वाग्रे जिह्वाग्रे मित्रबान्धवाः ।
बन्धनं चैव जिह्वाग्रे जिह्वाग्रे मरणं ध्रुवम् ॥

"Forgetting what one gives, and remembering what one receives." Once Swami Saradananda said humorously about one woman devotee of the Master, who though otherwise good, was given to much talkativeness: "If she gives even a tender-coconut, the entire household will know of it by her shouting." Even Sri Sarada Devi remarked on the harsh tongue of this particular devotee, "It is not good to be so much talkative. One only invites misery for oneself by constantly dwelling on defects in everything. G—has lost all sense of delicacy in her obsession about speaking the truth. I, for one, cannot bring myself to do that. An unpleasant truth should never be told."⁸ This recalls to us the famous advice given in the *Manusmṛiti*: "Speak the truth, speak the pleasant; do not speak the unpleasant truth, do not speak the pleasant untruth. This is the ancient Law."⁹

Once at Dakshineswar a devotee was behaving in an improper way and Swami Adbhutananda found it impossible to check his irritation. He scolded him and the devotee felt very hurt. Sri Ramakrishna knew how the devotee had suffered, and when the devotee had left he said to Adbhutananda: "It is not good to speak harshly to those who come here. They are tormented with worldly problems. If they come here and are scolded for their shortcomings, where will they go? In the presence of holy company never use harsh words to anyone, and never say anything to cause pain to another."¹⁰ Such was the limitless compassion of Sri Ramakrishna! A few ambrosial words

issued from his lips used to dispel the dark clouds from the hearts of his listeners.

In the *Gita* speech is called *Tapas*—verbal austerity. It states: "Speech that is inoffensive, truthful, pleasant and beneficial, as also the study of the scriptures, is called verbal austerity."¹¹ The *Bible* also warns, "The stroke of the tongue breaketh bones. Many have fallen by the edge of the sword; but not so many as have fallen by the tongue. And weigh thy words in a balance and make a door and bar for thy mouth." One's speech should be short and contain only precise words. When one is in a fit of anger or emotionally upset, one should try one's best to refrain from the uncontrolled outbursts. When once words go out they cannot be stalled. Words feed on words and may lead to undesirable, violent actions and reactions. The tendency of the mind is to brood over some silly and petty matters and magnify them. It usually results in making a mountain out of a molehill. The monologue that goes on incessantly in the mind through the medium of words gives rise to all kinds of wild imaginings. One impetuous remark can cause much mental anguish. There is a humorous story in the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*. Once a gentleman while being shaved by a barber was slightly cut by the razor. At once he cried out, "Damn." The barber didn't know the meaning of the word and insisted on knowing what it meant. But when he did not get any proper reply he said, "If 'damn' means something good then I am a 'damn', my father is a 'damn' and all my ancestors are 'damns'. But if it means something bad, then you are a 'damn', your father is a 'damn', and all your ancestors are 'damns'."

The question arises how to deal with

11. *Gita*, XVII—15.

अनुद्वेगकरं वाक्यं सत्यं प्रियहितं च यत् ।

स्वाध्यायाभ्यासनं चैव वाङ्मयं तप उच्यते ॥

8. *The Gospel of the Holy Mother* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, 1984), p. 119.

9. *Manu Samhita*

सत्यं ब्रूयात् प्रियं ब्रूयात् न ब्रूयात् सत्यमप्रियम् ।

प्रियं च नानृतं ब्रूयादेष धर्मः सनातनः ॥

10. Swami Chetanananda, *Sri Ramakrishna As We Saw Him* (St. Louis, Vedanta Society of St. Louis, U.S.A., 1990) p. 86.

wicked people? One can rebuke these people, but without hatred or malice. One has the right to hiss at these people but not to bite. Therefore it is said while dealing with the wicked watchfulness and caution should be exercised (*Śāṭhyam sadā durjane*).

Of all the powers truth is the most powerful. Everything pays homage to it. The character of a truthful person is like the transparent waters of the Himalayan Ganga. His words are packed with immense power and purity. A liar or corrupt person, day and night is worried and anxious to shield his lies and misdeeds from exposure to the public. He spends sleepless nights in para-

lyzing fear at the prospect of sudden detection. Such a guilt-ridden life is a miserable one, in spite of worldly possessions and position. A truthful person, on the contrary, is free and happy. He may not have worldly goods or social status, but the contented and joyous life possible for him will make even a king envious. Therefore Sri Ramakrishna and other great souls emphasize again and again the importance of truth. Sri Ramakrishna said, "Even those engaged in worldly activities, such as office work or business, should hold to the truth. Truthfulness alone is the spiritual discipline in the Kaliyuga."¹²

12. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, p. 177.

Cry for Ties

DR. K. S. RANGAPPA

Man alone perhaps
Pines for coordinates
—Family, friends, forbears,
Behind, before, all around.

Ego-bound, without egos beside,
Right and left and centre,
Lost he feels
In time, in space.

Crowded more, prouder he is.
Happier, too, he fondly believes,
If he brighter burn
Than brother stars.

Affinity each
He quite forgets,
Is coordinate, pinned the more,
Of built-in pain early or late.

Every hook and bond
Is mortal, he knows;
Yet he hopes,
Himself and planets his own
Will last and last.

The sun-god, too,
Seeming for ever,
Born somewhere,
Will die some day.

The timeless ONE, if he but saw
Is feel beyond feel
Of silent SELF within himself,
Ticking away,
Awake, adream, asleep,
He'd happily do
With or without egos more,
For peace unspeakable, deathless, too.

The Origin of the Universe—Science and the Vedas

K. K. BHATNAGAR

Modern Physics is trying independently to unravel the deep mystery of cosmogony. But the Vedas, thousands of years ago, aphoristically outlined the origin of the universe. Will the findings of the new Science and the intuitive predictions of the Vedic Seers be the same? asks the author. Sri K. K. Bhatnagar serves in the Indian Administrative Service.

CONJURE a picture of many millions of atoms frothing in an ocean of undefinable fluid energy. The image is somewhat similar to the earliest stages of the universe when present-day galaxies were only of the size of tiny groups of atoms, waiting excitedly to burst forth from their abode of compact energy fields to hurtle away from the centre of the 'big bang'.

Can one imagine the power of the system or person who could cause the explosion of an order which would throw millions of galaxies, each containing millions of stars, in a million different directions?

The existence of such a system cannot be envisioned with any degree of accuracy, but our five thousand year old Vedas tell us allegorically that the Person/Force who performed the miracle was the *Ādi-puruṣa* (God) who, if He were to be conceived in human terms, would have thousands of heads (*sahasra-śīrṣāḥ*), thousands of eyes (*sahasra-akṣaḥ*), and thousands of feet (*sahasra-pāt*). If the spiritual words of the Vedas are to be believed, it checks logically, because only a miraculous superman with supernatural strength could throw anything with such force. However, to return to the actual recitation in the Vedas, let us turn to the original verse that threw up the questions of what, and how, and when of the origin of the universe. Along with this, let us trace the creation of the universe through

the twin time-streams of the Vedas and Particle Physics, and see for ourselves the startling resemblance between what is being seen now in modern physics and what was said by our ancients thousands of years ago—

*Na asat āsīt no sat āsīt tadānīm,
na āsīt rajaḥ no vyomā paroḥ yat.
Kim āvarīvaḥ kuha kasya śarman,
ambhaḥ kim āsīt gahanām gabhīram.*

(*R̥g Veda, Nāsadiya Sūkta, Verse 1*)

The non-existent was not (then) nor was the existent (then), the earth was not (existent), nor the firmament, nor that which is beyond, (when there was nothing then); what could cover what, and where, and in whose care? Did the waters and the bottomless deep (then exist)?

In this 'hymn of creation' a profound height of speculative enquiry is seen. We think of the world and things therein as either existing or non-existing; we do not imagine beyond these two alternatives. Here, the author of the verse goes beyond and speculates on the nature of existence itself. In the beginning, was the world non-existent? If so, how could the existent come out of the non-existent? For, is it not a fact that in the beginning the earth did not exist, nor did the stars and the firmament? How did they come about then, and by whose power?

The most current and authentic belief today in the circle of high physics about the creation of the universe is that it began as the 'nebula', meaning an intense, red hot cloud from which galaxies came to be formed, and eventually, our own earth and life were created. Consider now the following verses of the *R̥g Veda*—

*Hiraṇyagarbhaḥ samavartatāgre bhūtasya
jātaḥ patih̐ ekaḥ āsīt
saḥ dādadhāra pṛthivīm dyāmutemām
kasmai devāya haviṣā vidhema*
(*Hiraṇyagarbha Sūkta, Verse, 1*)

*In the beginning of creation there existed
the Hiraṇyagarbha. He was the sole
master of all that was created. He upheld
the Earth and the Heaven...*

The word *Hiraṇyagarbha* means one whose interior is lustrous (like gold). This is the *Vedic* expression to denote the brightness and effulgence of the 'nebula' which was the first product of creation.

*Āpaḥ ha yat bṛhatih̐ viśvam āyan
garbham dadhānā janayantih̐ agnim
tataḥ devānām samavartata asuḥ
ekaḥ kasmai devāya haviṣā vidhema.*
(*Hiraṇyagarbha Sūkta, verse 7*)

Āpaḥ means the primordial matter. The root of this word means 'that which is spread all over'. The whole meaning is—*'the primordial matter (or the nebula) which is spread over the universe in the beginning of creation, containing in itself the seed or generative fire'*.

The above two verses bring us close to the initial physical reality of one compact, shining (full of energy) field, i.e., the nebula. Then—

*Tasmāt virāt ajāyata virājaḥ adhi puruṣaḥ
saḥ jātaḥ atī aricyata paścāt bhūmim
atho puruḥ.*

(*Puruṣa Sūkta, Verse 5*)

*From the (one fourth of) Puruṣa was
born the Virāt (same as Hiraṇyagarbha).
When the Virāt came into being, it expanded,
and later the earth was born.*

The principle of conversion of energy into matter is delineated in the following verse—

*Tam yajñam barhiṣi praukṣan puruṣam
jātamagrataḥ
tena devāḥ ayajanta sādhyāḥ
ṛṣayaḥ ca ye.*

(*Puruṣa Sūkta, Verse 7*)

The heart of this verse is the word *Yajña*, which is best and usually described as 'sacrifice', but signifies also surrender, dissolution (or death) and re-creation, which is what actually happens during the involution and evolution of the universe.

*Tiraścīnaḥ vitataḥ raśmih̐ eṣām
adhaḥsvit āsīt upariśvit āsīt
retodhāḥ āsan mahimānaḥ āsan svadhā
avastāt prayatih̐ parastāt.*
(*Nāśadiya Sūkta, Verse 5*)

*The rays (or desire of the Creator) spread
across (the whole world). The result was
that the small organisms, bearing seeds
(were born) and big organisms (bearing
seeds) were born.*

And thus, life sprang up.

The real mystery occurs before the stage of the 'big bang'. At one stage there was nothing, and suddenly, WHAM! The inky blackness of the universe was filled with red hot gases which in time converted into millions of galaxies. How did this happen?

Let us know what modern physicists say about it. According to them, the universe

in its first stages was 'a false vacuum'—a nothingness which actually *contained something*. This was a vacuum in which no particles existed, but which was permeated by energy, out of which particles eventually congealed like raindrops from a cloud.

Today, when the concept of existence itself is questioned, particles of matter are imagined as invisible energy clouds one moment, and real visible matter the next. Thus, the stage of 'nothingness' before the big bang is really a silence pregnant with activity. From this intermediate stage, the emergence of galaxies in their hot nascent stage is easily explainable.

Consider, on the other hand, some verses of the *Veda* predicting this mysterious intermediate stage, at the time of their writing thousands of years ago—

*Yah cit āpah mahinā paryapaśyat dakṣam
dadhānāḥ janayantīḥ yajñam
yah deveṣu adhi devaḥ ekah āsīt kasmai
devāya haviṣā vidhema
(Hiraṇyagarbha Sūkta, Verse 8)*

(One who) by his might held primordial material which contained in itself the dexterity (and potency) to create sacrifice (to bring forth the Primeval Creation.)

Once again, the verse already quoted, no. seven of the *Hiraṇyagarbha Sūkta*—"The primordial matter contains in itself the seed of generating fire."

And finally—

*Sataḥ bandhūn asati niravindan hṛdi
pratīsyā kavayah manīṣā.
(Nāsadiya Sūkta, Verse 4)*

They find that bond of existence in non-existence by seeking it within their heart. The link, the intermediate position connec-

ting the existent with the non-existent was there in the non-existent all the time. It only needed someone to see it. This is why the verse emphasises on *those who seek (that mystery) within the heart of things...*

Who were the early *Ṛṣis* (Seers) who explained the nature of creation of the universe, and how? It is obvious that they were men of profound learning, acquired not through experimentation, for sophisticated means of such experimenting were not in their possession then. These men acquired their knowledge through deep meditation and pure reasoning, a method adopted by much acclaimed Greek philosophers later.

Have we reached the end of the mystery? Once, scientists postulated the existence of a molecule as the smallest particle in the universe, but they were later overtaken by the atom, and further by the electron, proton and neutron. Today, mischievously, a large number of still smaller, subatomic particles keep proliferating with impunity, thus questioning the very concept of 'smallest' or 'basic'. Among these are neutrinos, mesons, and pi-mesons, to name only a few out of the two-hundred odd. And whether they are particles or clouds or probabilities in energy, only God knows.

Perhaps, the clincher is still in the word 'God'. However, the *Veda* seem to be having the last word on even this question—

*Iyam viṣṭīḥ yataḥ āvabhūva yadi va
dadhe, yadi va na
yah asya adhyakṣaḥ parama vyoman
saḥ anga veda yadi vā na veda
(Nāsadiya Sūkta, Verse 7)*

Whence this creation has come; who holds or does not hold? He who is its surveyor in the highest Heaven; He alone knoweth—and yet doth He know?

The Mother of All

SWAMI ATMASTHANANDA

(Continued from the previous issue)

Sri Sarada Devi is often called the Mother of the Ramakrishna Order. Swami Atmasthanandaji describes how the Holy Mother through Divine Love and her innate acumen nursed the fledgling Order to grow to its present proportions with branches spread all over the world.

ONCE Girish had an intense desire to have the presence of the Holy Mother in his home during the worship of Durgā. The Mother acceded to his wish, and left Jayarambati for Calcutta. She stayed at Balaram Bose's house in Calcutta. During the first two days of the worship she remained at Girish's home from morning till evening accepting the salutations of hundreds of people. She was not feeling well, and the strain of the two days made her very ill. So it was decided that she could not be present during the most auspicious *sandhi-pūjā* (worship done at the juncture of the eighth and ninth lunar days) at night. Hearing it, Girish felt so much depressed that he refused to go to the worship hall. But when the sacred moment approached, the Holy Mother suddenly appeared, having walked all the way with a woman companion from Balaram's house at night. Girish's joy knew no bounds. With a voice choked with emotion and gasping breath he began to tell everybody present there: "I thought my worship was in vain, but just now Mother has come, herself knocking at the door and announcing, 'Here I am.'" Thus Girish was blessed with the privilege of worshipping the Living Durga as his own mother.

Sri Sarada Devi was looked upon as the true Mother by Sri Ramakrishna's women disciples as well. Among them was the saintly orthodox widow known as Gopala's Mother. She saw in Sri Ramakrishna her Chosen Deity the child Krishna (Gopala). To her the Holy Mother was the manifesta-

tion on earth of the Primal Power, and spiritual complement to her (*Iṣṭa*) Gopala. She used to say to Holy Mother: "Unless I see both of you as inseparable, my mind doesn't feel satisfied." When Gopala's Mother lay on her deathbed the Holy Mother came to see her. When she was informed of the Mother's presence the old lady said, "Gopala, you have come?... Today you should take me on your lap." The Holy Mother lifted the head of Gopala's Mother on her lap. The dying saint wanted to touch the feet of the Mother as a mark of respect. Someone took the dust of the Mother's feet and put it on her head. For Gopala's Mother, Holy Mother was inseparable from her Gopala-Krishna.

Another woman disciple of Sri Ramakrishna was known to all the devotees as Gauri-Ma, but the Holy Mother used to call her Gaur-Dasi. She used to speak of the Mother as "the Living Divine Mother of the Universe", the Goddess Lakṣmi, herself; the Power of Brahman, and so on. In the name of the Holy Mother, Gauri-Ma established an ashrama for women and girls and gave it the name Sāradeśwarī Āshrama. She was instrumental in spreading public awareness of the true greatness of the Mother. The Holy Mother's closest attendant for thirty years was Golap-Ma. She managed the Mother's household when the Mother used to stay in Calcutta, and was convinced that the Holy Mother was Mahā-Māyā, born to give liberation to people. Another close associate of the Mother was Yogin-Ma. From a vision

granted to her by Sri Ramakrishna, Yogin-Ma gained the realization that the Holy Mother was utterly pure, undefiled by the evils of the world. Golap-Ma and Yogin-Ma were to the Holy Mother what Jayā and Vijayā are to the Divine Mother Durgā.

Sri Sarada Devi is the Mother of the entire Ramakrishna Order. She began playing this role even during her Dakshineswar days during the Master's lifetime. Sri Ramakrishna was a strict disciplinarian and had instructed the Holy Mother to give Rakhal, Baburam, Latu and other young disciples only two or three pieces of bread (*chapatis*) at night. But how can a mother put such restrictions upon her children's food? So the Holy Mother gave the boys as many *chapatis* as they wanted. When Sri Ramakrishna objected to this on the ground that overeating would spoil their midnight meditation, the Mother replied: "Simply because they have eaten two more pieces of bread, why do you worry? I shall take care of their future welfare." The reply pleased the Master, for it assured that the responsibility of the future Monastic Order was in competent hands. Thus Sri Ramakrishna himself was the first to recognize the Holy Mother as the *Saṅgha-Janani*, the Mother of the Order.

However, it was Swami Vivekananda who actually coined the term *Saṅgha-Janani* and gave currency to it. He said: "*This Order of ours—she (the Holy Mother) is its Guardian, Protectress; she indeed is the Mother of our Order.*" In fact, the establishment of the Ramakrishna Order was in response to her earnest prayer. It is her boundless love that is circulating in the Order, holding together all its members. Right from the very inception of the Order the Holy Mother had firm faith in its greatness and future possibilities. Any utterance of hers was regarded as a command by the founding fathers. Everyone, from Swami Vivekananda

to the juniormost monk was always eager to follow Mother's instructions. Once there was a financial difficulty while conducting plague-relief work in Calcutta. Swamiji even thought of selling the Belur Math, but gave up the idea as the Mother disapproved of it. It was with the Holy Mother's permission and in her name that Swamiji celebrated the worship of Durgā in the image for the first time at Belur Math. And although Swamiji wanted to include the customary animal sacrifice, this too was given up as the Mother disapproved of it.

The Holy Mother took a lively interest in the day-to-day activities of the various centres of the Ramakrishna Order. She reproved the head of the Koalpara Ashrama for being too authoritarian and calculating in his management for the inmates, and advised him to be loving to all. She stressed the importance of love as the binding force in the monastic community. When three of her disciples received Sannyāsa from her she prayed to Sri Ramakrishna: "Master, protect their vow of Sannyāsa. Wherever they may be—in the hills, on the mountains, in the forest or in wilderness—provide them food."

Holy Mother fully approved of Swami Vivekananda's introduction of work and social service as an essential part of monastic life. When a monk once raised the subject that in the view of some people it was against the ideal of Sannyāsa to run hospitals, keep accounts, etc. the Mother said in clear terms: "If you don't work, with what will you occupy yourselves day and night? Is it possible to meditate all the twenty-four hours? ...Everything shall go on as the Master ordains. The Math will continue as it is doing now. Those who can't put up with this will clear out." When the head of a centre complained to her that even well-to-do people came to their charitable dispensary, the Holy Mother advised him to keep

the door of the dispensary open to all without any restrictions.

How much the welfare of the children of Sri Ramakrishna was in her mind was made clear from another incident. Once during the worship of Durgā at Jayrambati, when all had departed after offering flowers at her feet, the Mother said to a Brahmacharin, "Bring more flowers, and offer them on behalf of Rakhal, Tarak, Sarada, Khoka, Yogen, and Gopal. Offer flowers in the names of all my known and unknown children." It so happened that one of her monastic sons had to leave the Order. She gave him this consoling assurance: "Can a mother ever forget her child? Know for certain; I am always at your side. Don't fear." She always held high the ideal of Sannyāsa before her sons. About a monk she said one day, "Why should he live with a householder just because he is ill? There are Maths and Ashramas. A monk is a model of renunciation." In all her decisions she kept in view the all-round welfare of the Monastic Order. She herself arranged for the transfer of ownership of Sri Ramakrishna's birthplace (Kamarpukur) and her own (Jayrambati) to the Belur Math. When Swami Vivekananda established an Ashrama at Mayavati in the Himalayas for the practice and propagation of Advaita, he made the rule that no external worship of any kind should be performed there. When one of her disciples wrote to the Holy Mother seeking her view on the above rule, she replied to him: "He who is our Guru (Sri Ramakrishna) is all Advaita. Since you are all his disciples, you too are Advaitins. I can emphatically say, you are all surely upholders of Advaita." After Sri Ramakrishna's passing away, the Holy Mother guided the Saṅgha through its formative period for thirty-four long years.

The Mother had equal love for both monks and the laity. Even for those who were not

her initiated disciples she had the same motherly love. She used to keep in mind the individual preferences and needs of her children. When preparing food she always took care to give each person his favourite dish. Everyone felt that it was him or her that the Mother loved most. She used to pray for her initiated disciples in this way: "O Lord, awaken their spiritual consciousness; grant them liberation; take care of their welfare both here and hereafter. This world is full of sorrow and suffering. Please see that they won't have to come back to this world again." Again, "O Lord, I have so many children in different places. Please look after those whom I can't remember. Do all that is good for them."

Being a mother, she could take food only after all her children were fed. Once on her birthday her attendants somehow persuaded her to take her own food first, but she could not eat more than a morsel. She said, "Unless my children are fed, food won't go down my throat." She observed no caste or class distinctions at the time of giving initiation. Brahmins, non-Brahmins, weavers, hunters, railway porters, fallen women, Christians, Parsees--for all she kept the door to spirituality open.

Her monastic disciples were special objects of her selfless love. What Swami Virajananda felt after he had been acquainted with her only for a short time he recorded: "...In this way she would snatch away one's mind and heart and make herself dearer than one's own self. At home I used to love my mother very much, and she too loved me so much. But the Holy Mother is my mother not for this birth alone; she is my eternal Mother." After her Sannyāsi-disciples had finished their meal, she herself would remove their plates and clean the place. If any of them tried to dissuade her she would reply with disarming simplicity, "I am their mother. If a mother did not do

such things for her children, who else would ?”

Once when the Mother was staying at Koalpara, a Brahmacharin fell ill at Jayrambati. He became indifferent to food. Mother sent for him. For fear of passing the infection on to her, he stood at a distance and talked to her. But the Mother made him sit near her and affectionately stroked his body. She never called any of her sannyāsin children by their monastic names. “That is because I am their mother ; it breaks my heart to think of their renouncing all,” she would explain. A monk once asked the Mother how she looked upon them. She answered: “I look upon you as Nārāyaṇa (God in the form of human beings) and also as my sons.”

She was in no way less a mother to householders. One householder devotee asked her: “I call you ‘Mother’, but I want to know whether you are really my own mother.” The Holy Mother replied, “Am I not your own mother ? Certainly I am your own mother.” A woman once saw that her son was eating his meal with much enthusiasm in the Holy Mother’s presence, whereas he never did so at home. When the lady mentioned this, Holy Mother said with a mother’s pride, “Don’t you cast aspersions on my son. I am a mendicant woman. Whatever food I give my children they eat it with relish.”

One day a lady devotee came to see her, walking a long way in the hot sun. The Holy Mother, with great tenderness, started fanning her. Another lady who was of low caste brought one day some dishes cooked by herself. It was not customary in those days for Brahmins to eat food cooked by non-Brahmins. So one of the Mother’s nieces blurted out, “You ask for such things, that is why she brings them.” To this the Holy Mother replied, “She is my daughter ; should I not ask her for such things ?” A baby of a

certain woman devotee once soiled the floor and Holy Mother cleaned it up with her own hands. “Why should I not do it ?” remarked the Mother. “Is she a stranger ?” A young man with a blot on his character used to visit the Holy Mother at Jayrambati. Everybody requested the Mother to forbid his coming to the village. The Mother’s sorrowful response was: “Being a mother, how can I ask him not to come ? Such an injunction will never come out of my mouth.”

In 1911 the Holy Mother visited Madras in response to the earnest request of Swami Ramakrishnananda. The people there could not understand Bengali, nor could the Mother follow their language, Tamil. But when she gave initiation to them there was no need for an interpreter. The Mother herself taught them the Mantra, how to do *Japam* and meditation, and so on, and they understood everything. It was as if there was an eternal relationship between them. From Madras the Holy Mother went to Bangalore. One day Swami Vishuddhananda took her out to visit a nearby temple. When they returned to the Ashrama they found the courtyard filled with devotees. As the Holy Mother got down from the carriage, they all prostrated before her *en masse*. Moved by the sight, the Mother stood in silence for a few minutes with her right arm extended in benediction. The whole atmosphere was charged with a mystic silence. Then the Mother walked into the prayer hall of the Ashrama and sat there. The devotees also sat all around her. There was complete silence. Mother then expressed her sorrow at not being able to speak with them in Kannada. But the devotees replied in one voice, “No, no, this is all right. Our hearts are full. No words are needed on such an occasion.” The communication barrier between the Mother and her children had been overcome through the universal language of the heart.

The Holy Mother's all-embracing love was not confined to the people of India alone. Her great heart knew no geographical barriers and in its universal embrace included all people of all nations, races and cultures. During India's freedom struggle when anti-British feeling ran high, the Holy Mother said, spontaneously revealing her breadth of vision.: "They (the British people) also are my children." And she made this remark in spite of the fact that quite a number of her disciples were engaged in anti-government and even revolutionary activities. When Swami Vivekananda's western disciples, Mrs. Ole Bull, Miss MacLeod, Sister Nivedita and Sister Christine, came to Calcutta, the Holy Mother immediately accepted them as her own daughters and made them feel at home in their new environment. Sister Devamata and another lady (from Poland) coming to her later on felt the same maternal affection. Even at the very first meeting with Mrs. Ole Bull, Miss MacLeod and Nivedita, the Holy Mother made them feel that they had their place in her lap. In order to remove from their minds any hesitation, she ate with them. This evidently gave much relief and joy to Swamiji who exclaimed, "Isn't that wonderful! Mother ate with them." Sister Christine and Sister Devamata also had an equal share of Mother's love. It was at the earnest request of Mrs. Bull that the Holy Mother allowed her photo to be taken at Nivedita's Bose Para house. Mother at first did not agree to the proposal. But when she said, "Mother, I will take it (the photo) to America and worship it," the Mother could not refuse her daughter's sincere wish. This photo, which is now being worshipped everywhere, was the first photo ever taken of Holy Mother. Josephine MacLeod was overwhelmed by the Mother's love. She used to say, "Sarada Devi is endowed with divine insight," and "Sarada Devi is the Madonna, Mother Mary, of this new religious community."

One night, Miss MacLeod was returning to her dwelling after visiting the Holy Mother at the Udbodhan. With her was a Brahmacharin carrying a lantern to show the way. Miss MacLeod was wrapt in thought and muttering to herself, "I have seen her, I have seen her." Suddenly she became aware of the Brahmacharin's presence and, in a mood of exultation, whispered to him, "The Holy Mother! I have seen her." Among the Western women devotees it was Sister Nivedita who had the closest contact with the Holy Mother. Once she wrote to the Mother that when she prayed to the Virgin Mary, Sri Sarada Devi's form flashed in her mind. In the same letter she added, "Surely, you are the most wonderful thing of God--- Sri Ramakrishna's own chalice of his love for the world-- a token left with his children, in these lonely days, and we should be very still and quiet before you." In her great work, *The Master as I Saw Him*, Sister Nivedita wrote: "She really is, under the simplest, most unassuming guise, one of the strongest and greatest of women." Sister Christine who worked with Nivedita at the latter's school, was also equally fortunate to have the Mother's love. When, a few days after Nivedita's untimely death, Sister Christine visited the Holy Mother, the Mother remarked that they two had lived together. Now it would be so sad for her to live alone. Sister Devamata, who was a disciple of Swami Paramananda, was another favoured Western daughter of the Holy Mother. She wrote about her first meeting with the Mother: "I...found Holy Mother alone in a room behind the Shrine and laid myself and my offerings at her feet. She repeated my name twice with tender surprise. Then she placed her hand in blessing on my head. At her touch a spring of new life seemed to bubble up from my innermost heart and flood my being." There was no need for an interpreter, for Mother communicated in the language of the heart. Deva-

mata had the capacity to understand the unique greatness of the Holy Mother. She wrote: "Unbounded was her tender concern for every living thing. No human measure could contain it...All alike were her children. Hers was an all-embracing mother-heart which wrapped itself in love about every child born of woman, and her family was the human race."

Holy Mother could adapt herself to the manners and customs of different people. One summer afternoon an European lady came to see her. Saying, "*Esho*"—come in, the Holy Mother stretched her hand in the European manner and caught hold of the woman's hand. Then according to Bengali custom, she touched the woman's chin with her hand, which is the same as a mother's kiss. The woman's daughter was ill, and so she had come to seek the Mother's benediction. Holy Mother blessed her wholeheartedly, and her daughter soon recovered. Later on, the lady took initiation from the Mother. To Sri Sarada Devi no one was a foreigner.

She was the Mother of doctors as well. At different times during her life and at different places—Jayarambati, Koalpara, Calcutta—she had been treated by at least a dozen doctors who followed different systems of medicine—allopathic, homeopathic and ayurvedic. Among them Dr. Bipin Behari Ghosh and Dr. Satish Chakravarti (a brother of Swami Saradananda) were devotees of Sri Ramakrishna. Some others like Drs. Kanjilal, Sajani Babu, Lalbihari Sen and Swami Maheswarananda were initiated

disciples of the Holy Mother. That the Mother should have love for them all as her own children was only natural to her. But it is indeed remarkable that she should extend the same love to a stranger, Dr. Prandhan Bose, who was a Christian and one of the most distinguished physicians in Calcutta in those days. His coming was during the Mother's last illness. Dr. Prandhan Bose had to be brought by taxi and paid sixteen rupees per visit. He accepted the amount from the Mother's household for the first few days. But after his visits when he came downstairs he always found plenty of sweets, fruits and flowers in the cab, which had been kept there by the Mother's instructions. The doctor was touched by the love and kindness shown by the Mother. One day he asked Swami Saradananda, "Whom have I been treating all these days?" When the Swami informed him about the Mother, he was completely changed. From that day the doctor stopped charging fees, and even when the treatment was changed after a few days, he continued to make his call every day paying the cab fares himself. The renowned physician Dr. Nilratan Sarkar, and Dr. Sureshchandra Bhattacharya also, had occasion to experience the Holy Mother's love. Kaviraj Rajendranath Sen, Kaviraj Shyamadas Vachaspati and Kaviraj Kalibhushan Sen were some of the well known ayurvedic physicians who also had the privilege of treating the Mother. Whenever they came Holy Mother would always see that they were given plenty of mangoes, sweets, etc. as gifts.

(to be concluded)

Spinoza's Conception of God

DR. V. GOPALAKRISHNAIAH

This thoughtful essay delineates the transcendental and immanent nature of God, as conceived by the famous philosopher. The author is Reader in the Department of Philosophy at Andhra University, Waltair, Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh.

BENEDICT SPINOZA (1632-1677) was a rationalist in spirit. He held that knowledge comes through Reason. The knowledge which comes through opinion is not valid. There is yet another source of knowledge, intuition. Religious thinkers depend upon intuition as a source of knowledge. As a philosopher Spinoza depends upon rational understanding, reflection and speculation for solving problems. He was very much influenced by Bruno and Descartes. Descartes developed his system by mathematical method. Self-evident and valid knowledge can be seen in mathematics. Spinoza followed the geometrical method in developing his philosophy. He started from definitions and then proceeded to propositions, axioms and corollaries. Basing upon all these aids he developed his system. Spinoza was very much influenced by Euclid too. An examination of Spinoza's chief and acclaimed work *Ethics* reveals that Spinoza endeavoured hard to keep up mathematical and geometrical vigour in his philosophy.

He held that God was substance. In the words of Spinoza, "...By substance, I mean that which is in itself, and is conceived through itself; In other words, that of which a conception can be formed independently of any other conception." By God Spinoza means "a being absolutely infinite—that is, a substance consisting in infinite essentiality." Spinoza understands God in a philosophic way. God is infinite, eternal and all pervading being. He is the First cause and the

Uncaused cause. No human characteristics can be attributed to him. He is a great thinking being. It is unwise to attribute such words as fate to God. He is an infinite and omnipotent being. The universe is embedded in Him. In Spinoza's conception of God there is no scope for evolution. All are interlinked closely. All physical acts and mental acts are connected with one another. It is not possible to determine God with some features. All determination is negation.

In this way we find Spinoza's system a closed one. Spinoza is regarded as a pantheist. Pantheism is a doctrine which holds that God is immanent in the universe. It also holds that universe is God and God is universe. Pantheism is an evolved theory of God. It differs from monotheism and polytheism. When a single deity or principle is regarded as God, it is called monotheism, whereas if different deities or principles are regarded as God, it is called polytheism. In ancient Vedic thought of India we can find both monotheism and polytheism. Spinoza may be regarded as a monist in spirit. He holds a single principle, designated 'substance', as God. In this way he differs from theologians and presents his understanding of God. His interpretation is free from religious bias. It is purely philosophical in nature. Some people, feeling difficulty in understanding his conception of God, branded him as an atheist. But Spinoza was not an atheist. He believed in the existence

of God. Spinoza is also antiteleological in nature.

Spinoza's God has infinite attributes. By attribute he means "that which the intellect perceives as constituting the essence of substance." Of these infinite number of attributes the human intellect can perceive only thought and extension. Thought will be represented by mind and extension will be represented by body. God's mind is infinite in nature. Human mind is finite in nature. Moreover human mind cannot comprehend all the things. Body and mind are parallel in Spinoza's philosophy. They never interact with one another. Descartes holds that body and mind are interacting in nature. In Descartes we will find dualism. But Spinoza is a monist. Body and mind are not independent in Spinoza's system. They depend upon substance for their existence. Mind will have ideas in number. Body will be represented by actions. All ideas of mind are interconnected. Similarly all actions are interrelated. In a rational way he explains the relationship between mind and body.

These attributes will have infinite number of modes. By mode Spinoza means "the modifications of substance, or that which exists in, and is conceived through, something other than itself." The mode of mind is understanding or will. Whereas the mode of body is motion or rest. Human understanding has some powers such as thinking, reasoning, perceiving and imagining. Spinoza holds that because of these powers man is able to grasp something about reality. But human understanding is finite in nature. God's understanding is infinite in nature. Human being has no free will in Spinoza's thought. God alone is free and he can act like that. Spinoza's circumstances led him to hold views like this. Those were the days of religious persecution. The church authorities assumed dominance over all matters. Individual men could not interpret religious

matters. That is why Spinoza argued for freedom of thought and speech in his politico-theological treatise. He modified his views in this work and argued for such a condition.

Hegel compares Spinoza's ideas with those of others. His conception of substance may be compared to the Being of Parmenides. We can also find an answer to the problem of universals and particulars in Spinoza's philosophy. The substance may be regarded as the universal of Plato's system. Attributes may be regarded as individuals. In this way a comparison can be made with the other systems. Spinoza develops his philosophy in a geometrical way. He propounds philosophic infinity in his system which is the negation of negation. Here he employs geometrical figures as illustrations of motion of infinity. In his *opera postuma* preceding his *Ethics* he has two circles, one of which lies within the other but are not concentric. The inequalities between substance and attributes with modes cannot be explained. Hegel tells that to philosophize one must be Spinozistic in the beginning. Spinoza's philosophy is more systematic and consistent when compared with Descartes'.

Now about the ideas of Spinoza on human soul. According to Spinoza there is but one substance or principle, on which all processes, both physical and mental depend and from which they proceed. In his opinion there can be no such thing as soul or ego, a spiritual substance that has thoughts, feelings and volitions, the mind exists as a complex mode consisting of its thoughts, feelings and volitions—and these states of mind are themselves not effects of body or of bodily processes; mind and body do not influence one another, there is no interaction between them. Ideas or states of mind correspond to bodily processes—the two series are

(Continued on page 312)

Swami Vivekananda and the Imitation of Christ

PRAVRAJIKA BRAHMAPRANA

A little book by a Catholic monk was the constant companion of Swami Vivekananda and great was his regard for it. Why? In this article the mystique of it is unveiled. The author is a nun of the Sarada Convent, Vedanta Society of Southern California at Santa Barbara, U.S.A.

IT was after a large religious gathering at Ganges, Michigan. All other dignitaries and monastics had dispersed, except for two shaven-headed, long-robed silhouettes and a lone figure—a senior swami of the Ramakrishna Order and disciple of Holy Mother, who remained seated. After a heartbeat of hesitation, one of the Dominican monks came forward to sit at the swami's feet. Moments passed until the seated monk, his face shining with wonder, dared to break the stillness. "Swami?" he queried.

"Yes?" The swami lifted his head to see who was speaking. "Swami," the young cloistered monk resumed, "I have to know: is what you are practicing better in any way than the path I am practicing? Will your path bring greater reward?"

The swami listened intently to the sincerity in the young monk's voice, then shook his head, his right hand raised in benediction, "No, no," he assured. "They are two paths that both lead to the same goal."

"Truly?" asked the monk in joy.

"Yes," the swami replied emphatically. "They are two paths, but the goal is the same."

"Then, Swami, there is something more I wish to ask of you," the young monk entreated.

"What is that?" asked the swami gently.

"I keep a special picture on my altar. Will you bless it?"

"Yes, yes."

The Catholic monk then removed from the folds of his cossack a small, framed photo, and held it reverently with both hands for the swami to see. The old swami leaned forward in his chair. But then without a word, he suddenly fell back. The photo was none other than Sri Sarada Devi's. Slowly the old swami lifted the Holy Mother's picture to his head in salutation, as the young Dominican monk, seated at his feet, wept silent tears of joy.

For nearly a hundred years, Westerners have accumulated a rich treasury of Vedanta stories—an oral tradition that began with the advent of Swami Vivekananda at the Chicago World's Parliament of Religions. It was the "Hindoo" Swami whose devotion to Christ first swept across the land and whose Christ-like presence revitalized Christianity.

Shortly after stepping on American soil, Swami Vivekananda disclosed his deep connection with the West and its Christian tradition. In a 20 August 1893 letter to his faithful South Indian disciple Alasinga Perumal, Swamiji wrote from Breezy Meadows: "I am here amongst the children of the Son of Mary, and Lord Jesus will help me." And help, He did, for the Swami soon came to understand that those who were attracted to him, were drawn by "his love for the Prophet of Nazareth and through

that love were able to understand the broadness of Hinduism."¹

Cornelius Heijblom, the future Gurudas Maharaj, one of the great swamis of the Ramakrishna Order, experienced this love firsthand. In August 1899, during Swami Vivekananda's second visit to the West, Gurudas came to the New York centre where Swamiji was staying, with a large picture of Jesus in his hand. "The Swami asked me what I had there," Gurudas remembered:

I told him that it was a picture of Christ talking to the rich young man. "Oh, let me see," he said eagerly. I handed him the picture. And never shall I forget the tenderness in his look when he held the picture and looked at it. At last he returned it to me, with the simple words: "How great was Jesus!" And I could not help thinking that there was something in common between these two souls.²

What was the special link between Swamiji and Christ that captivated those who experienced it? What made the Swami's devotion to Christ palpable enough to convert some of the West's leading intellectuals to an Eastern faith? What, in fact was the power that could topple Church dogma and awaken a new Christ consciousness in the Western world?

Swami Vivekananda's devotion to Christ is a love-story that has far-reaching effects. It was a love deep enough to endure the bitterest slander of jealous missionaries—Christian and Hindu alike—and broad enough to transcend the confines of religious organization—of even the American Vedanta

Societies which the Swami himself had founded.

This Christ-consciousness sprang from what the Swami called the Sanatana Dharma, the Eternal Religion, "the philosophy which can serve as a basis to every possible religion in the world."³

Today, true to Vivekananda's words, that uncloistered consciousness has penetrated deep into every nook and cranny of American church parishes and monasteries—the unseen power behind the spiritual revolution of the 20th century—a revolution that alone explains how a Ramakrishna parable could be heard by chance from a southern Baptist pulpit, a cloistered Catholic monastic could be initiated by a swami of the Ramakrishna Order, East-West dialogues and Inter-religious councils could spring up nationwide, and Pope John XXIII could issue a recent edict acknowledging Eastern traditions as ancient paths to God—religious traditions from which the Catholic Church could learn.

In the days of Dakshineswar, Narendranath Datta, the future Vivekananda, gathered with other young monks at the feet of his master, Sri Ramakrishna. There Naren first discovered Thomas à Kempis's little book *The Imitation of Christ*. After reading it from cover to cover, young Naren became inspired, and as was his habit, he then tried to inspire others by quoting passages from it, saying: "The life of anybody who truly loves the Lord will be perfectly molded in His pattern. Therefore, whether we truly love the Master or not will be proved by this fact."⁴

Shortly after Sri Ramakrishna's passing, Matangini Devi, the mother of Baburam, one

1. His Eastern and Western Disciples, *The Life of Swami Vivekananda*; Advaita Ashrama, ed.; Fifth Edition, (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1981), vol. I, pp. 404-5.

2. Burke, Marie Louise, *Swami Vivekananda in the West, New Discoveries: A New Gospel* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1987), vol. 5, p. 159.

3. Burke, Marie Louise, *Swami Vivekananda in the West, New Discoveries: A New Gospel* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1987), vol 6, p. 257.

4. *The Life of Swami Vivekananda*, vol. I, p. 157.

of Naren's brother-disciples, invited Sri Ramakrishna's monastic disciples to Antpur, her native village. In December 1886, Naren, Baburam and seven other young monks arrived. Inspired by Naren who was suffused with their master's spirit, the young monks felt themselves linked to one another by a great spiritual power and resolved to formalize this sense of brotherhood by taking the vows of renunciation in each other's presence.

It all found expression one night before a huge Dhuni (sacred fire) in the compound. Overhead was the clear night sky, and all around was quiet. Meditation lasted a long time. When a break was made Narendra began to tell the story of Jesus, beginning with the mystery of his birth, through to his death and resurrection. Through his eloquence, the brother-disciples could catch something of the apostolic fervour that had impelled Paul to spread the Christian gospel far and wide in the face of adversity. Narendra charged them to become Christs themselves, and so aid in the redemption of the world; to realize God and to deny themselves as Jesus had done. Standing there before the sacred fire, their faces lit up by the flames, the crackling of the wood the sole disturbing sound, they took the vows of renunciation before God and one another. The very air was vibrant with their ecstatic fervour. Strangely, the monks discovered afterwards that all this had happened on Christmas-eve!⁵

This unplanned event marked the inception of the Ramakrishna Order. It had been annointed by Swami Vivekananda with the spirit of Christ—the spirit of renunciation, a quality which Swamiji was later to extoll to the world.

To become Christ was not only Swami Vivekananda's special teaching to his brother-

disciples, but it was also his message to future Western disciples.

"Become Christ" was a battle-cry that surfaced again and again throughout Swamiji's life—in his conversations, his lectures, and in his writings. It was to become part of the Swami's divine message to the Western world.

When Sri Ramakrishna's young monastic disciples later took up residence in the Baranagore Math, they were occasionally plagued by Christian missionaries who tried to convert them. But Narendra did not hesitate to challenge the missionaries point-by-point, until victorious. He would then expound to them the greatness of Christ.⁶ According to Swami Sadananda, who was with Swamiji at Baranagore Math days, in spite of extreme hardship and deprivation, Sri Ramakrishna's disciples begged funds "to buy and distribute some hundreds of copies of the *Bhagavad-Gita* and the *Imitation*, the two favourite books of the Order at that time."⁷

In mid-1890, twenty-seven-year-old Narendra left the Baranagore Math as a wandering sannyasin—to return not until February 1897, as the world-renowned Vivekananda. For three years the Swami travelled anonymously throughout India, accumulating spiritual power, and, at the same time, gathering knowledge of India and its vast spiritual tradition as well as that of the Western world.

Once the Swami stopped at Belgaum, and there met a prominent citizen who fulfilled his desire to visit Goa. According to Swami Vivekananda's authoritative biography, "This was no ordinary visit, for [Swamiji] had a special purpose in mind."⁸ The Swami's

⁶. Ibid, p. 206.

⁷. Sister Nivedita, *The Master As I Saw Him* (Calcutta: Udbodhan, 1953), p. 71.

⁸. *The Life of Swami Vivekananda*, vol. 1, p. 319.

⁵. Ibid, p. 196.

host, Subrai Naik, a Sanskrit scholar well-versed in the Hindu scriptures, was deeply impressed with the extraordinary intellect and spiritual knowledge of his guest. The Swami's reason for visiting Goa "was to study Christian theology from old Latin texts and manuscripts which were unavailable elsewhere in India". A 19 January 1964 report in the *Hindu* noted:

Subrai Naik invited a learned Christian friend, J. P. Alvares, and introduced him to Swamiji who had a talk with him on this subject in Latin (?). Alvares, who was greatly impressed by Swamiji's erudition, immediately made special arrangements for him to stay at the Rachol Seminary, the oldest convent-college of theology in Goa, four miles away from Margoa, where rare religious literature in manuscripts and printed works in Latin [are] preserved.

Swamiji spent three days in this seminary assiduously perusing all the important theological works that he found there. His gigantic intellect and original views about Christianity based on sound knowledge were indeed a marvel to the Father Superior and to other Padres and also to all students of this seminary.⁹

During this three-year period of wandering, experiences such as these were preparing Swami Vivekananda for his future impact on the Western world.

At this time the Swami's "very appearance was striking; indeed it was regal," wrote his disciples in *The Life of Swami Vivekananda*:

His body and bodily movements were instinct with grace. His luminous eyes and imperious personality, together with the suggestion of greatness that there was about him, made him conspicuous wher-

ever he went. Staff and monk's water-pot in hand, a copy of the *Gita* and of *The Imitation of Christ* in his bundle, and ochre-clothed, he journeyed on in silence, joyful at heart.¹⁰

At Junagadh, the Swami was the guest of Haridas Viharidas Desai, the Dewan of the State, who became one of the Swami's staunchest admirers. At Junagadh the Swami often spoke of Jesus Christ. According to Swami Vivekananda's biography:

[The Swami] said that he had long since come to understand the influence of Christ in regenerating the ethics of the Western world. Becoming fervent in his eloquence, he went on to relate how all the medieval greatness of Europe—the paintings of Raphael, the devotion of Saint Francis of Assisi, the Gothic cathedrals, the Crusades, the political systems of the west, its monastic orders and its religious life—all were interwoven in one way or another with the teachings of the sannyasi Christ.¹¹

Years later, the Swami confided to an American devotee Mrs. Wright that "he cared for Thomas à Kempis more than any other writer."¹² So great was Swamiji's regard for this Roman Catholic monk, that in 1889, he translated into Bengali selections from the first six chapters of *The Imitation of Christ*, which he sent along with a preface and parallel quotations from Hindu scriptures, to a now-defunct Bengali monthly, *Sāhitya Kalpadruma*. The quotations Swamiji submitted for publication emphasize the need for direct experience of God—not merely vain argumentation—along with the tools of one-pointed devotion, renunciation, dispassion, and real study.

In these seventeen verses we do not find a revolutionary spiritual message, but rather

9. Loc. cit.

10. Ibid, p. 212.

11. Ibid, p. 290.

12. Ibid, p. 408.

a foretaste of à Kempis's unique and haunting ability to infuse each stanza with layer upon layer of meaning. This genius gives his work the unmistakable stamp of a spiritual classic.

On every page there are spiritual slogans that, like sages, draw the mind inward through guided meditations. And through their holy company, they work (1) as a tonic of religious inspiration; (2) to remind us of the pitfalls of our human nature; (3) by exposing the conscious, sub-conscious or unconscious and, in so doing, to unsheath the power of the mind to sense the proximity of the Atman; and (4) to instruct us in external observances that, when practiced, become deep inner realizations.

Thomas à Kempis presents our potential pitfalls with such sensitivity and dignity, that the spiritual seeker is never left with the feeling of incompetency in making an independent spiritual assessment. "The man that is not yet perfectly dead to himself," à Kempis, calmly explains, "is quickly tempted and overcome in small and trifling things (I: 6.1)." Without rebuke, à Kempis, the psychologist, simply discloses our ego nature—a clear, uncoloured vision that naturally prods us, of its own accord, to take the posture of egolessness. And with his verse—"Call often to mind that proverb, 'The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing (I:1.5)'"—à Kempis, the teacher, charms us into enacting what it is we are actually to feel. With this simple verse, he reveals how to draw on one's inner resources in order to channel the mind Godward. Finally we come face-to-face with à Kempis, the visionary: "Each part of the scripture," he writes, "is to be read with the same Spirit wherewith it was written (I:5.1)"—a verse that both entreats us to practice and extolls us to realize what it is, in truth, saying.

From this small collection of verses, we can begin to grasp why this Christian classic compelled a Vivekananda to carry it with him throughout India, and how its message later inspired one of India's greatest teachers to preach the essence of Christianity to the Western world.

Born at a time when India was subject to the British Raj, Swami Vivekananda disclosed his own unembittered perspective of a devotion to Christ that grew in spite of the Christianity he witnessed. "We happen to be the subjects of a Christian government now," the Swami candidly wrote in his "Preface to the Imitation of Christ":

Through its favour it has been our lot to meet Christians of so many sects, native as well as foreign. How startling the divergence between their profession and practice! Here stands the Christian missionary preaching: "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. Take no thought for the morrow"—and then busy soon after, making his pile and framing his budget for ten years in advance! There he says that he follows him who "hath not where to lay his head", glibly talking of the glorious sacrifice and burning renunciation of the Master, but in practice going about like a gay bridegroom fully enjoying all the comforts the world can bestow! Look where we may, a true Christian nowhere do we see. The ugly impression left on our mind by the ultra-luxurious, insolent, despotic, barouche-and-brougham-driving Christians of the Protestant sects will be completely removed if we but once read this great book with the attention it deserves.¹³

Although written anonymously, *The Imita-*

13. Advaita Ashrama, ed. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, "Preface to the Imitation of Christ," Mayavati Memorial Edition (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1971), vol. VIII, p. 160.

tion of *Christ* and the name of Thomas à Kempis are inseparably linked. Thomas Hammerken was born in 1380, in Kempen, Germany. At the age of twelve, young Thomas was sent by his poor, hard-working parents to the famous Deventer school of theology, founded by Gerhard Groot under the influence of the Flemish mystic John of Ruysbroeck. As was the school's custom, Thomas was soon called Thomas from Kempen—the name by which he was to become known to the entire Christian world.

Thomas's natural bookishness and love for solitude were balanced by a deep devotion to the Virgin. It was a dream of her compassion and power that ultimately convinced Thomas of his monastic vocation. In 1399, at the age of nineteen, Thomas à Kempis joined the Augustinian Order, at Mount St. Agnes, and fourteen years later entered the Catholic priesthood.

Mount St. Agnes was a poor monastery, supported by the income made from copying manuscripts. This line of work suited Thomas, who was one of the monastery's most prolific copiers, as well as original writers.

Today, Thomas à Kempis is accredited with numerous literary works: a chronicle of his monastery, several hagiographies, innumerable tracts on monastic life, several collections of sermons, some letters, hymns, and *The Imitation of Christ*. On August 8, 1471, at the age of ninety-one, Thomas à Kempis died, one year after the first Latin edition of his book appeared in print. Twenty-eight years later it was published in English, a work which has since been translated into more languages than any other book, except the Bible.¹⁴

Thomas à Kempis's outer life was as austere and uneventful as his interior life

was rich in self-discovery. Thomas, the monk, left no stone unturned in uncovering and confronting the subtle workings of the human psyche or in revealing higher levels of consciousness and the most exalted states of divine communion. Only a mystic could make this late medieval work breathe with the spirituality that has made it a masterpiece. "‘Written’, perhaps," Swami Vivekananda aptly described, "is not the proper word."

It would be more appropriate to say that each letter of the book is marked deep with the heart's blood of the great soul who had renounced all for his love of Christ.¹⁵

In *The Imitation of Christ*, Thomas à Kempis laid bare his struggle Godward with bold truths that could make even the staunchest aspirant squirm. In his famous chapter on death, à Kempis divulged a deep meditation—each aphorism tearing away veil after veil of this world's illusion with a force that could either plunge the mind deep within to centre itself on the only true reality, or compel its reader to close the book in fear. "How often dost thou hear these reports" à Kempis asks his reader:

Such a man is slain, another man is drowned, a third breaks his neck with a fall from some high place, this man died eating, and that man playing!

One man perished by fire, another by the sword, another of the plague, another was slain by thieves. Thus death is the end of all, and man's life suddenly passeth away like a shadow.¹⁶

Trust not to friends and kindred, neither do thy put off the care of thy soul's wel-

14. *Encyclopedia Britannica* (Chicago: William Benton Publishers, 1959), p. 147.

15. *The Complete Works*, vol. VIII, p. 159.

16. A Kempis, Thomas, *The Imitation of Christ*, "Of Meditation on Death" (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), I: 22.7.

fare till hereafter; for men will forget thee, sooner than thou art aware of.¹⁷

Thomas à Kempis reminds his reader:

When it is morning, think that thou mayest die before night; And when evening comes, dare not to promise thyself the next morning.

Be thou therefore always in a readiness, and so lead thy life that death may never take thee unprepared.¹⁸

For a Vivekananda, during his three-year period as a wandering sannyasin, passages such as these were like welcome companions. "That great soul," Swamiji later wrote:

Whose words, living and burning, have cast such a spell...over the hearts of myriads of men and women; whose influence today remains as strong as ever, and is destined to endure for all time to come; before whose genius and Sadhana (spiritual effort) hundreds of crowned heads have bent down in reverence, and before whose matchless purity the jarring sects of Christendom, whose name is legion, have sunk their differences of centuries of common veneration to a common principle—that great soul, strange to say, has not thought fit to put his name to a book such as this.¹⁹

"To obtain Bhakti," the Swami once told his Madras students before departing for the Chicago World's Parliament of Religions, "seek the company of holy men who have Bhakti, and read books like the Gita and *The Imitation of Christ*."²⁰

The Imitation of Christ is divided into four books: (1) "Admonitions Useful for a Spiritual Life," (2) "Admonitions Tending to Things Internal," (3) "Internal Consola-

tion," and (4) "Concerning the Sacrament." Altogether, the entire work contains over a thousand Biblical references as well as the strong influence of such great masters as St. Bernard of Clairvaux and others whose manuscripts Thomas à Kempis had copied while in the monastery.²¹

The first book of *The Imitation of Christ* shows the means to overcome worldly tendencies in order to prepare for conversation with Christ. It encompasses preparatory subjects such as cultivating humility, truthfulness, scriptural study, resisting temptation, obtaining peace, the profit of adversity, the importance of solitude and silence, along with the meditation on death.

The second book emphasizes the inward life: self-surrender, purity, contentment, righteous conduct, and devotion to Jesus Christ. Both the first and second book strongly resemble the abstentions and observances (*yamas* and *niyamas*) found in Patanjali's Yoga Aphorisms.

The third book discloses the nature of communion with God "without the noise of words" and the more advanced milestones along the path to God, including such random topics as "The Different Motions of Nature and Grace," "The Proof of a True Lover," "Four Things that Bring Inward Peace," "Against the Tongue of Slanderers," and "Of the Excellency of a Free Mind." Though Swami Vivekananda extolled Thomas à Kempis most for his *dasya* bhakti, or attitude as the servant of God, there are passages from this book that unmistakably border on *madhura bhava*, or the attitude of the lover towards the Beloved. So intense was à Kempis's divine love, that it culminated in the highest: "Enlarge Thou me in love," he wrote:

(Continued on page 313)

17. Ibid, I: 22.5.

18. Ibid, I: 22.3.

19. *The Complete Works*, vol. VIII, p. 159.

20. *The Complete Works*, vol. VI, p. 123.

21. *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, O'Brien, Thomas C., Exec. ed., vol. 7 (Palatine: Jack Heraty & Associates, Inc., 1981), p. 376.

Unpublished Letters

These unpublished letters are being brought to the light for the first time. Some letters of this series have appeared in previous issues of Prabuddha Bharata.

From Miss Josephine MacLeod to Sister Nivedita

December 20, 1899

Dearest Child,

A line to tell you that Swami was most successful last night on "Applied Psychology", there being much enthusiasm, and the best is that he slept soundly afterwards! to his astonishment.

He is still wondering if Miss Melton is equal to restoring his health. The *least* symptoms of ill ease being a sure proof to the contrary!!

December 21

* * *

"Happy New Year"—I called out to Swamiji this morning and his face broke into a smile as he said "Happy New Year to you and to me." I then made him greet the sun and gave him a gold coin! as emblematic of the new year's gifts to him.

He is quiet like a child—goes daily to Mrs. Melton—walks 2 or 3 miles, scarcely talks a word—in fact, he is so much quieter than I have ever seen him that I am watching to see the slightest new mood or moves that may come. For his physical health a month of this quiet would be of great service, but you know how uncertain he is and how quick the changes are made when he is ready.

Heart's love to you, always. I haven't had any letters for days from anybody. Except a cordial one from Mrs. Hearst whom I shall see on my way home.

Merry Xmas to you.

Love,
Jojo

From Josephine MacLeod to Sara Bull in Brittany

P.S. From Swami Vivekananda

6, Place Des Etats Unis
Saturday
August 4, 1900

Dearest II,

Swamiji arrived at 9 looking like a boy, he has lost 30 pounds and is vigorous. The Geddes come to lunch today to meet him. Fun?

He stayed at Gerald's last night, but comes to us today—having the nursery. He, Gerald, Margot, and I are to dine on the Eiffel Tower. I have invited Robert Patterson for Aug. 10—Francy & Betty go the 8th. Berta & Hol return the 6th.

Swami asked immediately after the "Sacred Cow of India." He thinks he would like to go to Lady Cunard's & he & I may run over to stay at Nevill Holy a few days.

This is but a line to tell you of our Prophet's well being.

Lovingly,
Jojo

Hello—Sacred Cow—

What are you doing in the forest meditating or counting how many palpitations Mrs. Brigg's heart gets a day?

V.

From Sister Christine to Josephine MacLeod

July ? 1902

Dearest Yum,

Your letter has just come and what can I say? I seem at times to lose all power of thought and the mind becomes a blank---no pain even.

They tell me that we sorrow only for ourselves and that it is all selfishness however refined it may be. Perhaps so---yet the human cries out.

For years I have prayed that this cup might be taken from me but now I have had to drain it to its dregs.

Yet while for us life is finished, for him this is Freedom Absolute. I try to think of that and that alone. And after all this life is but a little thing and short, thank God.

We would not have him back suffering in body, tortured in mind---no, not even for one hour would we? We would rather gladly suffer the pains and bear the sense of loss.

How beautiful it all came at the end! Just as he always hoped it would---"as it should be with a Yogi." And now I love to think of him "sitting in Eternal Meditation." Swami S---writes, "Never did we see him so sublimely beautiful, never was there such a look of joy on his face," as when he lay there on that Saturday morning. Shiva. Shiva. Shiva!

Christina

Footnote: A part of this letter has appeared in *Vedanta Kesari* May-1990 issue.

From Sister Christine to Mrs. Sara Bull in Bergen, Norway

Calcutta

July 13, 1902

Dearest Sin Sara,

You who have passed through this can understand.

There is nothing to regret, nothing, I tell myself. The exaltation that comes to me at times should be constant "yet this human nature speaks within."

Before that last parting in Calcutta the renunciation was complete and on my part it was a renunciation of the life itself, if only the ideal might be kept. And how it was kept! All that great, great energy turned to the very highest and triumphant over everything. How I prayed it might be so and his own deepest wish might be fulfilled, that he might reach the Great Peace through meditation, that all the delusions of Maya might be dispelled, that all bonds might be burst and he realize himself as a Great Free Soul. And so it was.

There are three letters from you Dear. I could not bring myself to write these last three weeks. I thank you for them.

Lovingly,
Christina

From Mrs. C. S. Sevier to Josephine MacLeod

Mayavati
(via Almora)
August 23, 1902

My dearest Miss MacLeod.

I hasten to reply to your affectionate letter received by the last mail. The passing away of our dearly loved Swamiji was indeed a terrible shock to us all, and of course especially to Christine, who nevertheless bore up bravely, and after the first week resumed her ordinary demeanour, though I can see, at times what restraint she has to put upon her feelings. I am so glad she happened to be here, so as to have the advice of a strong man like Swami Swarupananda! She has long talks with him about Swamiji and Advaita philosophy. When we think of

Swamiji, we try not to recall the fact of his *death*; we think of his *life*, his love, tenderness, devotion, and endurance to the cause of humanity, and honour him who served it with such abiding power, and such far-reaching genius: we owe him undying gratitude and reverence for what he taught us, and feel he was part of the living God who permitted him to do the world's work, and fight its battle for righteousness and truth. He certainly was the greatest man I have ever met, or am likely to meet: to you, who knew and loved him so well and truly, I need say no more! I understand the workings of your heart in respect to him, and deeply sympathize, I assure you, dear Miss MacLeod.

Christine is very quiet, and we get on famously together; she seems to enjoy the monotonous, quiet life we lead here, and I am certain, *rest* was what she greatly needed, she looked so pale and wan when she came first; the climate is equable and pleasant, and the natural beauties great—Christine, like me, is rapturous over mountain scenery, and its ever-varying beauties.

The Swamis hope to erect a temple and rest-house over the site where Swamiji's body was cremated in the Math grounds; a meeting was convened at the Town Hall, in Memoriam, last Saturday; I have not yet heard the results.

Swami Trigunatita will start for California in about a month's time; the friends at San Francisco have sent the money for his passage. Swami Turiyananda had a sad home-coming, and it was in the Bay of Bengal, from a fellow-passenger that he first heard of Swamiji's death. In his weak state of health, it must have been a crushing blow, and he is still far from well. I wrote and asked him to pay us a visit with Swami Brahmananda, but at present it is not to be.

Swami Saradananda told me that Swamiji left his personal money amounting to Rs 3700 in G.P. notes, and Rs. 900 in cash to his Mother. He had been in the habit of giving her Rs 50 per month and Swami seemed to think it would not bring her in much income. I yesterday had a letter from Swami Ramakrishnananda, in which he wrote that perhaps the admirers of Swamiji at Madras were going to build a Math in commemoration of him. I hope you had a good passage home, and that the voyage benefitted your health. I know how a sudden shock affects one's health for a long time after the occurrence.

Nivedita has had a little fever, but I believe is well again; she does not often write, but of course you hear regularly. Mr. Okakura is making a little tour in India, but I presume will return to Japan in time for the Congress. Christine sends love and sympathy to you in your mutual loss; she appreciates greatly your kind and friendly feelings towards her and often regrets she had not the pleasure of meeting you. Swami Swarupananda will answer your letter to him shortly; he is waiting to ascertain about the book you required, *Yoga Vasistha*; he has instituted inquiries in Calcutta about it, but apparently it is rather difficult to get; if it is not procurable, we shall send you an abbreviated copy, similar to the one I have. He sends his best wishes, sympathy and love to you. As you write, our beloved Swami was so broad, so loving in embracing all his disciples in their special way; & he was so strong in capacity for work; in fact it was a rest to him compared with standing still, which was a weary toil to him. Well, dear, I bid you adieu for the present. Wishing you peace of mind, and the blessings of an abiding love—from lovingly.

C. S. Sevier

From Compassion to Service

MANJU GOEL

The rendering of help to others in any form is a blessing in disguise. The perceptive writer is an additional District and Sessions Court Judge, New Delhi.

SHOULD we be kind to the poor and the suffering? Does the world depend on our kindness and benevolence? Or should we feel more humble and offer others our service or 'Sevā'? One may say that people having compassion, that is 'Dayā' for the poor, as well as those who seek to serve, both work to ameliorate sufferings. Hence, there is no distinction between compassion and service. However, considered, there is a vast difference in our attitude when we confer compassion and when we proceed to serve. There is also a difference in the satisfaction derived from work done for 'Seva' and the mere expression of 'Daya'.

About a hundred years back Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa was explaining three principles of the doctrine of the Vaiṣṇavas. One should always take the name of God with love and devotion, knowing the identity of the devotee and the divine, that is, the Vaiṣṇava and Krishna; one should respect the holy men; and one should have the conviction in one's heart that the whole universe belongs to Krishna, and therefore one should have compassion for all beings. No sooner had he uttered the words "Compassion for all beings," than he suddenly went into *Samādhi*, an ecstatic state in which he used to be conscious only of the undifferentiated Brahman, losing all consciousness of the phenomenal world. Regaining partial and normal consciousness in a short while he continued, saying, "Talk of compassion for beings! Insignificant creatures that you are, how can you show compassion to beings? Who are you to show compassion? You wretch, who

are you to bestow it? No, no, it is not compassion to *Jīvas*, but service to them as *Śiva*."

Swami Vivekananda found these words of the Master pregnant with meaning and offering a synthesis between two apparently conflicting paths—of devotion and knowledge. According to the theory of non-dualism, or Advaita Vedānta, everything in the universe is the manifestation of Brahman, Brahman which is impersonal, indeterminate and absolute. To attain this knowledge of non-dualism, people renounced society and retired to forests where they could find absolute seclusion. The *Sādhana* with austerity would continue till one would achieve the stage of "*Aham Brahmāsmi*," the knowledge of "I am Brahman," or "*Soham*—I am That." The path of love or devotion is much softer and sweeter. Devotion or Bhakti means intense and pure love for God, a personal God to start with. Devotion calls for no rewards. It does not know any fear. Devotion itself becomes the highest ideal for the devotee. The devotee, as it were, approaches God through devotion and at the end merges with Him. In intense Bhakti, the Bhakta seeks his '*Iṣṭa*' or beloved God in all beings and things around him. It is in Him that the whole universe rests. All the churches and temples are in Him.

The Instiller of compassion must be superior to its receiver. If all the universe is but Brahman or the manifestation of the Supreme, can the '*Jnāni*', the realized one, find himself superior to any being in this world? Similarly, the Bhakta who sees his

Lord in every being can only feel humble before all beings. Can either the '*Jnāni*' or the '*Bhakta*' entertain any feeling of anger or hatred towards any being or can he even be kind to them? Since he is the worshipper and his worshipped lives in every being, his only attitude has to be one of humility and devotion. Can he be kind to his own Lord? He can only serve or worship Him and feel blessed for having been able to do so. Serving the *Jiva as Śiva* he will have his heart purified and experience the *Sat-Chit-Ānanda*, the eternally blissful state.

Again if one adopts the path of Karma Yoga, that is, doing action without seeking the fruits thereof, one finds oneself in the same situation. On this path one must work selflessly but incessantly leaving, or rather offering, all rewards of his actions to God. The motive behind the work should be only to do good. If this is so, an opportunity to do good work is looked upon as a privilege. The world is not waiting for our benevolence. Even without our efforts the world will go on. The results of all good works—all temples, hospitals, orphanages and shelters built with enormous pious efforts may vanish due to natural calamities like hurricanes or earthquakes. Then why do we do good work? Because it is a blessing to ourselves. Swami Vivekananda calls upon us to serve God in man, and gives the key to blessedness in the following words:

We may all be perfectly sure that it will go on beautifully well without us, and we need not bother our heads wishing to help it. Yet we must do good; the desire

to do good is the highest motive power we have, if we know all the time that it is a privilege to help others. Do not stand on a high pedestal and take five cents in your hand and say, "Here, my poor man," but be grateful that the poor man is there, so that by making a gift to him you are able to help yourself. It is not the receiver that is blessed, but it is the giver. Be thankful that you are allowed to exercise your power of benevolence and mercy in the world and thus become pure and perfect...

Further, he emphasizes:

No beggar whom we have helped has ever owed a single cent to us: we owe everything to him because he has allowed us to exercise our charity on him. It is entirely wrong to think that we have done, or can do, good to the world, to think that we have helped such and such people. It is a foolish thought, and all foolish thoughts bring misery. We think that we have helped some man and expect him to thank us, and because he does not, unhappiness comes to us. Why should we expect anything in return for what we do? Be grateful to the man you help, think of him as God. Is it not a great privilege to be allowed to worship God by helping our fellow men? If we were really unattached, we should escape all this pain of vain expectation, and could cheerfully do good work in the world.¹

1. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989) vol. I, pp. 76-77.

Communal Harmony

NABANIHARAN MUKHOPADHYAY

The vision of global family can only be realized when human beings step out of their constricting conceptions of caste, colour, religious affiliation and nationality, says the author who is a freelance writer and the Secretary of Akhil Bharata Vivekananda Yuva Mahamandal, West Bengal.

It is unfortunate that so soon after Sri Ramakrishna's unique advent in the world of religions, in whose life people saw with their open eyes great but diverse religions lived and realized, giving practical verification of the sameness as to their common ends—namely love, service to mankind, and renunciation—there is a new spate of dissension, hatred, anger and violence in the name of religion today, spilling human blood on the bosom of our common motherland.

Such verification as we find in the life of Sri Ramakrishna has no second in human history and may not be repeated in our lives, but can we not even study, listen, and contemplate on what is said in the treatises of all religions? Can we not remember the picture in a rural setting depicted by Ramakrishna, of the same water taken by Hindus, Christians, Mohammedans, and others, who use only different flights of stairs? Did Jesus not command, "Love thy neighbour as thyself"? Did not Prophet Mohammed say, "A perfect Muslim is he from whose tongue and hands mankind is safe"? Have not all religions proclaimed that God is One and all men and women are His children? Did not Nanak say that God is One and He is the creator of all? Did not the old prophets moving Westward say: "All of you are children of the Most High"? According to Vivekananda, "In the Vedantic ocean, the Hindu, Mohammedan, Christian, and Parsee are all one, all children of the

Almighty God." (*Complete Works*, Vol. V, p. 286).

Swami Vivekananda said, "To fight, to assume the antagonistic attitude, is the exact contrary to his (Ramakrishna's) teaching, which dwells on the truth that the world is moved by love." (*Vol. V*, p. 190) Yet some people ignorantly take the name of Swami Vivekananda when they intend to fight and assume an antagonistic attitude in matters of religions. Swami Vivekananda never advocated the idea of a Hindu State. He says, "I do not care whether they are Hindus or Mohammedans or Christians, but those who love the Lord will always command my service." (*Vol. V*, p. 65) Tracing the history of coining by Persians, and currency in India, of the word 'Hindu', more clearly he says, "Thus this word has come down to us; and during the Mohammedan rule we took up the word ourselves...As I have said, it has lost its significance, for you may mark that all the people who live on this side of the Indus in modern times do not follow the same religion as they did in ancient times. The word, therefore, covers not only Hindus proper, but Mohammedans, Christians, Jains and other people who live in India. I, therefore, would not use the word Hindu." (*Vol. III*, p. 118). He said, "No civilization can begin to lift up its head until we look charitably upon one another; and the first step towards that much-needed charity is to look charitably and kindly upon the religious

convictions of others. Nay more, to understand that not only should we be charitable but positively helpful, to each other, how ever different our religious ideas and convictions may be." (*Vol III, pp. 187-88*)... "Religion must be studied on a broader basis than formerly. All narrow, fighting ideas of religion have to go." (*Vol. II, p. 67*).

He went a step further: "It is here in India that Hindus have built...churches for Christians and mosques for Mohammedans That is the thing to do ...until we conquer through love, until we have demonstrated to the world that love alone is the fittest thing to survive and not hatred, that it is gentleness that has the strength to live on and to fructify, and not mere brutality and physical force." (*Vol. III, p. 188*).

Swami Vivekananda held: "The *Bible*, the *Vedas*, the *Koran*, and all the other sacred books are but so many pages, and an

infinite number of pages remain yet to be unfolded....We take in all that has been in the past, enjoy the light of the present, and open every window of the heart for all that will come in the future. Salutations to the prophets of the past, to all the great ones of the present, and to all that are to come in the future." (*Vol. II, p. 374*).

Citizens of India, followers of *all religions*, are to learn this to get rid of the odious bogey of communalism. National integration can be achieved through proper education of the mind, which is very much lacking today among the so-called followers of all religions. This integration can come neither through deliberations and resolutions of Councils, nor by statements of the so-called intelligentsia, nor through legislation or slogans of so-called secularism, nor by application of state or communal forces.

SPINOZA'S CONCEPTION OF GOD

(Continued from page 298)

parallel—indeed they are modally identical. The mind and body are processes of one and the same substance expressed in two different forms. The goal of human life is the intellectual love of God, which is eternal like Reason itself. We feel and know by experience that we are eternal, and this existence of mind cannot be limited by time

nor manifested through duration. The term God is variously employed in Spinoza's system. He is identified with his attributes or he is the absolute unified substance with its attributes, or he is the unified substance itself, higher than these attributes. His real meaning probably is the universe conceived as eternal and necessary unity.

News and Reports

Report of activities of the Vedanta Society, 34 West 71st Street, New York, New York, 10023 (Phone: 212-877-9197).

This is the first Vedanta Centre in the United States of America, having been started by Swami Vivekananda in 1894. Swami Tathagatananda has been in charge of the Centre since 1977.

The Swami conducted Sunday morning services; Tuesday evening classes on the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna; and Friday evening classes on the Bhagavad-Gita. Group devotional singing, open to the public, was held every Saturday and Sunday evening.

Birthdays of Sri Ramakrishna, the Holy Mother, Swami Vivekananda, Lord Buddha and Sri Krishna were celebrated, as well as Easter, Durga Puja and Christmas. The

annual Vivekananda Fourth of July Festival took place as usual at the country home of one of the members.

On invitation Swami Tathagatananda has been conducting Seminars on Hinduism in a Protestant Seminary near New York for the last ten years, as well as in S. Connecticut State University for the last six years. He accepted a number of invitations to give outside talks at schools, colleges and other Vedanta Societies in the United States, Canada, Japan and India. Special guest lectures were given at the Vedanta Society by three visiting Swamis.

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA & THE IMITATION OF CHRIST

(Continued from page 305)

that with the inward palate of my heart I may taste how sweet it is to love, and to be dissolved, and as it were to bathe myself in Thy Love.²²

Finally, the fourth book exhorts the spiritual aspirant to cultivate a devotional attitude before receiving Holy Communion.

(To be concluded)

²². *The Imitation of Christ*, III: 5.6.

REVIEWS & NOTICES

EPISTLES OF SAMKHYA-YOGIN By SWAMI DHARMAMEGHA ARANYA. Published by Adinath Chatterjee, Kapil Math, Madhupur, Bihar, 1989. 230 pages plus xvi. Rs. 50/-.

According to Sāmkhya-yoga, man can rise above all pain only by arriving at right knowledge, arising from right discrimination between the Self and the non-self—between Purusha and Prakriti. The above book will show the sincere aspirant in a simple way how to gain this right knowledge. As one reads this work, one will come to agree with Richard Garbe who says: "In Kapila's doctrine for the first time in the history of the world, the complete independence and freedom of the human mind, its full confidence in its own powers, was exhibited."

The book under review is a good collection of essays and letters written by the author to sincere aspirants treading the path of Sāmkhya-yoga. It is that rare combination of profound scholastic knowledge and deep spiritual insight which is seen only in really evolved souls. Such mature wisdom, presented in a style so clear and concise, derives its authenticity from first-hand experience gained after several long years of spiritual practice. Reflecting as it does the author's own life as a sadhaka of high attainments, and his breadth of outlook, there is no doubt that the book will prove to be an unfailing source of inspiration, guidance and solace to all spiritual aspirants in their journey towards the Goal.

Great stress has been laid on mental compliance to discipline. Ethical culture, introspection and detachment, awareness, renunciation and prayer are some of the important topics dealt with in the book. Throughout, the author has emphasized actual spiritual practice. The advice found in the book contains words of caution as well as words of encouragement, which can otherwise be gained only through close contact with a spiritually advanced soul. However, the analysis of one or two points mentioned in the chapter, "Pūjā or Worship" may have to be revised. The work would have been still more helpful to beginners if the contents had been arranged to show the graded path.

The book will be of great interest to the student and the scholar as well. The author has discussed the abstruse principles of Sāmkhya and explained the intricate technicalities of Yoga in a strikingly original form, drawing his material from the highest authorities. Useful cross-references are also cited all along.

As Sri Ram Shankar Bhattacharya writes in his Foreword: "A careful study of the present work will show that Sāmkhya-yoga, whose true meaning and significance have practically been lost, has every possibility and fitness to deliver a message of hope to suffering humanity." (p. ix).

The publication of this book has been made possible through the devoted care with which some of the author's students have preserved his letters and instructions. The gratitude of the readers of this work naturally goes to them in the first place. The publisher has to be congratulated for presenting the book in such beautiful format and neat printing.

*Swami Jagadatmananda
Belur Math*

ESSAYS ON RELIGION, EDITED BY DR. BHABAGRAHI MISHRA & DR. BISHNUPADA PANDA. Published by Institute of Comparative Studies & Mayur Publications, Bhubaneswar, 1989. 144 pages, Rs. 100/-.

Religion has always been a challenging subject for human interest and understanding. In course of time the nature and understanding of religion changes and it is essential for every age and society to understand the phenomenon afresh. Not doing so may lead the social beings to a blind alley.

The understanding of a single individual might be questioned in many respects, but a combined understanding is likely to be more free from obvious drawbacks. The present effort of a Bhubaneswar group of scholars is a result of their collective attempt to present in print a new appraisal of religion in its various dimensions. The title is dedicated to the memory of late Prahlad Pradhan, who was one of the founder-directors of the Institute of Comparative Studies,

Bhubaneswar. Prof. Pradhan was a professor of Sanskrit at Utkal University, and later the first Vice-Chancellor of Sri Jagannath Sanskrit University, Puri.

The anthology includes eleven essays from various authors in different walks of life. It includes essays on "Religion in the Service of Humanity"; "Radhakrishnan and the Harmonization of Texts"; "Trend of Religious Consciousness in India"; "Bairagi Mishra and His Gita"; "Religion Resounds Reasoning"; "Pdt. Nilkantha Das and His Conception of Religion"; "Religion and Fundamentalism"; "Hindu Sacred Image: Its Creation and Destruction"; "Bhagavad Gita and Modern Management"; and "Jagannath: A Unique Facet of Hindu Religion".

Most of the essays emphasize the role of reason in religion. A critical evaluation of various religious tendencies is essential for the proper growth of human society. Dr. G. C. Nayak, the present Vice-Chancellor of Sri Jagannath University, while discussing Bairagi Mishra's understanding of the Gita, stresses on the need of search for truth through pure reason. He applauds the originality in Sri Mishra's interpretation of the Gita because of the freedom of intellect underlined by him. In the line of Kathopanishad, Krishna is the charioteer in the form of intellect (*Buddhim tu sārathim viddhi*). Once we dedicate ourselves to Buddhi, we become free from ignorance and get the key to salvation. Similarly, Dr. B. Kar, in his essay on Pdt. Nilkantha Das and His Conception of Religion, holds that the real form of religion is *Yukti dharma*; unless we apply *yukti* and *buddhi* (reason and intellect) to experience, we cannot realize the true nature of man's religion. Only through reason can we reach true religion, or the religion of man. All other essays in the anthology are worth reading, and throw sufficient light to understand the nature of religion and society.

Sri S. P. Dubey
Jaharpur

SACRED CENTERS (DEVELOPMENT OF A CLASSIFICATORY SCHEME), BY JAMES J. PRESTON. Published by Mayur Publications, C-5, Unit-3, Bhubaneswar, 751-001, India 1987. 78 pages. Rs. 60/-.

The book under review is the outcome of the author's untiring research work. In this book he has beautifully presented a classification study of South-Asian Hindu sacred centres, especially the temples. This facilitates a comprehensive study of All-South-Asian Hindu temple network.

The religious network of Hinduism consists of festivals, deities and sacred centres. Temples are key elements in this network. Sacred centres represent an elaborate network which operates at social, economic and religious levels to help integrate the human experience of the sacred. It is most complex due to the diversity in Hindu religious life.

In this sacred centres' scheme of classification, the author has classified South-Asian Hindu temples into six different levels: All-South-Asian, Regional, District sub-regional, Local, Domestic and Multi-level. Each level has been further sub-divided into subcategories and has been well-defined and characterized with ample numbers of examples. All have been beautifully arranged in seven different tables.

The author has not only classified the temples in different levels, but also has discussed the *horizontal bonds* (connections between the sub-categories of the same level) and the *vertical bonds* (connections between the different levels) among them. According to the author: "No temple stands alone: each forms a mode in a vast multifaced web."

To illustrate the utility of the temple scheme presented, the author has applied this scheme in a particular case. For this purpose he has selected Sarala Temple, fitting the middle range of the scheme.

While defining All-South-Asian level of Hindu shrines, the author has given a footnote (page 15) that unlike in Christianity, there is no universal level shrine in the Hindu System. But this is not true. Sri Ramakrishna Temple at Belur Math (West Bengal, India) can undoubtedly be classed at the universal level because it attracts devout people from all over the world. Impressed by the universal message of Sri Ramakrishna, not only Hindus, but followers of other faiths visit in large numbers.

The temple scheme presented in Mr. Preston's study will help South-Asian specialists carry on more discussion and research on South-Asian religious life.

In the end of the Book, the author has added a Bibliography and an Index which surely increases its ease of use. A photograph of the Mukteshwar Temple in Orissa on the frontcover enhances the beauty of the volume.

Overall, the book is a good piece of work. We hope that it will be cordially received by Eastern and Western scholars, add to their knowledge and facilitate their research.

Sri Ishwara, R:

MAJOR POETICAL UPANISADS, BY SWAMI GABHIRANANDA, published by Sri Ramakrishna Math, Trichur, Kerala, 179 pages plus xxxii. Rs. 22/-.

The book under review presents the four *Upaniṣads*—*Īśa*, *Kena*, *Kaṭha* and *Muṇḍaka* in original Sanskrit along with an English rendering. It has two appendices, a Concordance and a Conclusion. Swami Bhuteshananda, President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, has given a benediction, and a scholarly Foreword has been written by Swami Tapasyananda.

In the first verse of the *Īśavāsyā Upaniṣad* we find the transcendent and immanent aspects of Brahman. The second verse which was a favourite of Mahatma Gandhi, asks us not to crave for worldly riches. The *Kena Upaniṣad* points out that Brahman cannot be known by the five senses, but it is to be understood by intuition. The story of the gods trying to find who was greatest among them, brings out the need for humility, devotion and self-control for the realization of the Supreme.

The *Kaṭhopaniṣad* is longer than the previous two mentioned *Upaniṣads*. It embodies the famous dialogue between Naciketas and King Yama, the god of Death, about the immortality of the soul. It draws the distinction between *śreyas*, the Path of the Good, and *preyas*, the Path of the pleasant, which present themselves to every

man. Nachiketas chooses the former. This *Upaniṣad* is highly poetical.

In the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*, in course of the conversation between Saunaka and Angirasa, a distinction is drawn between *parā* and *Aparā* knowledge. The former is concerned with the Knowledge of Brahman, whereas the latter deals with secular knowledge.

Appendix I has two sections: the first dealing with the great utterance 'I am Brahman', and the second 'Meditation on the Self', taken from the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* and *Mahānārāyaṇa Upaniṣad*, respectively. 'I am Brahman' shows the identity between the Individual Self and the Universal Self. Verse 13 (page 116) reads: "He who considers himself to be differentiated and different from the Un-differentiated Brahman goes from death to death." The section on 'Meditation on the Self' asks the spiritual aspirant to set his mind mainly on the Self, sacrificing all other pursuits.

Appendix II is entitled: 'Vedic Religious Ideals'. It is a lecture delivered by Swami Vivekananda in 1896.

The Concordance consists of parallel passages from *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* and *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*. The all-pervasiveness of God is emphasized in the *Upaniṣads*. Sri Ramakrishna says: "It is God Himself who has become all this—the Universe, *māyā*, and the living beings..." (page 141).

The Conclusion contains passages from the *Aitareya* and *Chāndogya Upaniṣads*. The essence of man is Supreme Consciousness. It is named sometimes the heart or the mind. It is Brahman. It is the foundation and support of the universe. We should practise self-control. We should live in accordance with the injunctions of the Vedas. Thus living we shall merge in Brahman, and never return to *samsāra*, the plane of relative existence.

As already mentioned, the book is a simple translation of the above named *Upaniṣads*, written from the standpoint of Advaita. It does not contain technical, philosophical discussion on the *Upaniṣadic* teachings, but is meant to popularize the immortal verses.

It definitely serves the purpose of helping the reader "delve deeper into the mysteries of the absolute Truth"—as Swami Bhuteshanda has expressed in his Benediction.

Dr. G. N. Kundargi

FRAGRANCE OF ETERNITY, BY J. S. DESHPANDE, published by Kusummala Kolarkar, Congress Nagar, Nagpur, 440-012, 1988. 142 pages, Rs. 60/-.

The book is essentially a soliloquy of a spiritual mind. An advocate and criminal defense lawyer, the author, the Late Sri Janardan Shrikrishna, alias Tatyasaheb Deshpande, was a poet and philosopher at heart. The eighty-eight pieces of his musings in one hundred and thirty-four pages of this book are essentially of the nature of meditations, describing and depicting an inward journey of a mind possessed of spiritual longing.

Like the author himself, who avoided all publicity living a simple life in a small but beautiful hill-station of Vidarbha, his realizations are simple and straight to the mark. What is God? God is the ultimate Truth. How is He manifest? He is manifest to us through the rich consciousness that He has bestowed on us. Pure consciousness is the very substance of the Divine. "We only see 'things.' We never see through things, that is the whole trouble. As soon as we learn a little to see through things we do gain the power to see through life the Beyond." (page 43) The progressive evolution of our life consists of an onward march through the multiple phases of this fundamental Consciousness. "The most unique thing of evolution is there within us and that is consciousness." (page 55) "All spiritual progress consists in complete transformation of our personality from the physical to the innermost layer of the being." (page 57) All progressive evolution, so to say, is evolution from 'clod to God'. The author's philosophy of life comes beautifully through to us in the following poetic lines:

Between the outer world and the inner world there is this wall of our body with only a small window of our waking consciousness which opens both ways. We are in the habit of sitting in that window the

whole of our life—our face towards the outer world all through and gazing upon the outward things and happenings—our back upon the inner world. But if we only sit sideways in that window we can look to both the worlds...Those who can thus look at and experience both the sides... have the supreme satisfaction of leading the total life which is the final realization and fruitful perfection of life. (page 92)

And does not Tagore, the poet singing the supreme songs of the Upanishadic universal consciousness, ring to us unmistakable when the author of the book under review (which might appropriately be called a journal on the lines of *Amiel's Journal*) writes: "What Divine Play is being enacted within me, only you know, my Lord! Are you yourself watching your own play through me, my Lord? That thought gives me such a thrill of delight that I forget everything including happiness and sorrow, loss or gain, life and death, the 'I' itself and everything that 'I' has gathered through innumerable lives!" (page 48)

Miss Kusummala Kolarkar has done a service to all who feel the longing within themselves for the Divine and the Eternal by publishing the book. We sincerely hope that some of the misprints and, specially, the misordering of the *contents* will be taken care of in the next edition.

Smt. Mamata Ray

THE END OF AN AGE? BY SHIBA PRASAD MITRA, 129 pages plus ix, Rs. 95/- Published by Shiba Prasad Mitra, K-57 Jangpura Extension, New Delhi 110-014, 1989.

A little over sixty years ago, Oswald Spengler in his *Decline of the West* prophesized that the Western civilization which had started declining after Napoleon, would come to an end around 2000 A.D. Writing *The Study of History* a generation later, Arnold Toynbee was not so pessimistic. He believed that the Western civilization, unlike other civilizations, would after all, last. In *The End of An Age?*, Shiba Prasad Mitra puts forward the thesis that Spengler "was nearer the mark, and what he had said may be coming to pass. The Western civilization

may die about 2000 A.D. And if it dies, it would die really by its own hand." (page 8) national relations, and in other aspects of life, cannot be overemphasized.

How is it that a civilization which put mankind for the first time in history above want and which made tremendous strides in scientific advancement, organizational efficiency and material progress, would die by its own hand? Mitra's answer is that the self-annihilation would come out of self-aggrandizement. He traces the history of Western civilization, the history especially of its major powers, to show that all that they have minded most and pursued most at the cost of other peoples and other nations, is *possession and power*. In order to cover up their arrogance, they have put forward the theses of 'Chosen People' (the British), or the 'Master Race' (the Germans), or 'Manifest Destiny' (the Americans). The Russians have been no less expansionists and no less cruel to their subject peoples, but in fairness it must be acknowledged that they have not, unlike their other Western counterparts, been as racially arrogant.

The arrogance, be that of possession, of power, or of race, cannot but lead to the annihilation of those who are guilty of such gross abuse of human and moral values. After all, Mitra emphatically asserts, there is a positive "correlation between the fall of nations and the violation of moral law and no nation, however great, can go on flouting with impunity basic moral principles. If it does, disaster will follow. ...Such seems to be the lesson of history." (page 33) Mitra firmly believes that peace, cooperation, toleration and moderation are more conducive to the long life and continuity of a society and civilization than intolerance, cruelty, war and exploitation. Unfortunately for mankind, the Western civilization in recent times wrought these evils on the human race.

Therefore, Mitra pleads for the realization on the part of nations, particularly the superpowers, that the stoppage of the arms race is the prime foreign policy imperative in the world today, along with consequent abolition of thermo-nuclear weapons, elimination of other dangerous armaments, and establishing 'peaceful coexistence' and cooperation between nations. The importance of moral values in foreign policy and inter-

Mitra pins his last hope, not so much on politicians, but on those dedicated men and women of Western civilization who are working for the cause of peace and abolition of nuclear weapons. A miracle might happen, he asserts, with *Glasnost*, *Perestroika*, and *Demokratizatsiia*. An atmosphere of mutual trust necessary for peaceful coexistence and cooperation might, after all, be generated.

Mitra has written with conviction and his knowledge of history and current affairs cannot but evoke our admiration. He has raised issues whose relevance for the future of mankind cannot be questioned by anybody. A third world war, if it comes, may well end not only Western civilization, but possibly all human life on the planet. Let not any nation or any person draw comfort from any false sense of security. If all nations particularly the Western ones, learn before the end of the century to grapple with their destiny, the labour of Shiba Prasad Mitra (which, I am sure, is a labour of love for him) in writing the book will be fulfilled.

• Dr. Anil Baran Ray

1. ESSENTIAL ADVICE OF THE KADAMPA MASTERS, TRANS BY GESHE WANGYAL

2. A BUDDHIST VIEW OF ABORTION, BY BIKKHU NYANASOBHANO

3. MATRCETA'S HYMN TO THE BUDDHA, BY VEN. S. DHAMMIKA.

4. A TASTE OF FREEDOM, SELECTED DHAMMA TALKS BY VEN. AJAHN CHAH OF WAT PAH PONG.

5. MASTER OF THE DIVINE EYE, BY HELLMUTH HECKER

(Five Wheel Publication Booklets, Buddhist Publication Society, P.O. Box 61, 54 Sanghaja Mawatha, Kandy, Sri Lanka

The first small booklet translated under the supervision and guidance of a Mongolian

Lama, Geshe Wangyal, serves as a pocket size mirror in which we see our own image and distortions, sometimes with satisfaction, and sometimes with a feeling of horror. At every step the reader is enabled, with consistency and insistence, to do intense heart searching and introspection to know for himself, and then come to the right conclusion, that practising is not the same as preaching; to desire is to deserve.

A close study of the booklet creates in the reader deep interest in his own transformation. A good amount of advice from the Kadampa Masters has made its way into this small booklet which gives practical solutions to the many knotty problems the reader confronts in his day-to-day life, and goads him to right action.

The second book very interestingly argues and sums up moral, religious and psychological ramifications of resorting (or not resorting) to abortion. The arguments are coherent and logical with the religious touch of the Buddhist faith. Thinking of committing a heinous crime is as grave as committing the crime itself. Knowing fully well that the foetus would one day bloom into a human being, and yet nipping its life in the bud, is an act tantamount to murder and is liable to moral guilt. This small booklet, on an important and controversial topic, should serve as a guide to all those who contemplate such an irreligious course of action. The author's final advice is: "Those of us who have procured or participated in an abortion should face up to the misdeed, acknowledge it, and resolve to live henceforth full of kindness for all beings."

In this third booklet, the voice of Ven. S. Dhammika rises like a fountain of chanting, hymns (152 in number), which are all in admiration and praise of the rare virtues and qualities of Lord Buddha. The hymns are simple and appealing to the common man and are free from scholarly stiffness and archaic or ornamental language.

There are several books on meditation, but very few of them lay down practical steps leading to the truly meditative state of mind. But Ajahna Chah, the author of the fourth book, *A Taste of Freedom*, dispels the deep rooted idea in many that meditation is only for a select few saints. The meditative state of mind, according to him, can be accomplished by any individual, irrespective of his religion, region, caste or creed. The human mind is basically sublime, pure and calm by nature. It is perturbed and distracted by outward agencies. To lift the mind to the meditative condition is a scientific process. The booklet illustrates this process by giving practical suggestions. One feels, after reading, like experimenting with the meditative process immediately. The main aim of the present small volume is to give the reader a taste of freedom. The Buddha said, "What you want, that you will become." The language of the translator is simple, direct and clear.

The last of the listed booklets contains a short biographical sketch of the Anuruddha, a cousin and direct disciple of Buddha. Anuruddha was one of those very few disciples of Buddha who ascended to *arhatship*, which is a state of *Nirvāṇa* during one's lifetime. As an *Arhat*, Anuruddha lived and constantly practised the four foundations of mindfulness which ultimately led to an end of his craving and his attainment of equanimity and serenity.

The booklet describes in brief many facets of the great personality, his ordination as a master of the Divine Eye, attainment of *arhatship* and revelations of his past life, besides various other spiritual experiences which are interesting. Anuruddha's observations on the different states passing through which Buddha finally attained *Nirvāṇa* indicate the insightful knowledge Anuruddha had of higher worlds.

Br. Yati Chaitanya

PRACTICAL SPIRITUALITY

WHAT is meditation? Meditation is the power which enables us to resist all this [our slavery to nature]. Nature may call us. "Look, there is a beautiful thing." I do not look. Now she says, "There is a beautiful smell; smell it!" I say to my nose, "Do not smell it," and the nose doesn't. "Eyes, do not see!" Nature does such an awful thing—kills one of my children, and says, "Now, rascal, sit down and weep! Go to the depths." I say, "I don't have to." I jump up. I must be free. Try it sometimes. In meditation, for a moment, you can change this nature. Now, if you had that power in yourself, would not that be heaven, freedom? That is the power of meditation.

How is it to be attained? In a dozen different ways. Each temperament has its own way. But this is the general principle: get hold of the mind. The mind is like a lake, and every stone that drops into it raises waves. These waves do not let us see what we are. The full moon is reflected in the water of the lake, but the surface is so disturbed that we do not see the reflection clearly. Let it be calm. Do not let nature raise the wave. Keep quiet, and then after a little while she will give you up. Then we know what we are. God is there already, but the mind is so agitated, always running after the senses. You close the senses and yet you

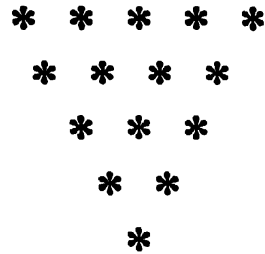
whirl and whirl about. Just this moment I think I am all right and I will meditate upon God, and then my mind goes to London in one minute. And if I pull it away from there, it goes to New York to think about the things I have done there in the past. These waves are to be stopped by the power of meditation.

Meditation is the gate that opens that [infinite joy] to us. Prayers, ceremonials, and all the other forms of worship are simply kindergartens of meditation. You pray, you offer something. A certain theory existed that everything raised one's spiritual power. The use of certain words, flowers, images, temples, ceremonials like the waving of lights brings the mind to that attitude, but that attitude is always in the human soul, nowhere else. People are all doing it; but what they do without knowing it, do knowingly. That is the power of meditation.

Slowly and gradually we are to train ourselves. It is no joke—not a question of a day, or years, or maybe of births. Never mind. The pull must go on. Knowingly, voluntarily, the pull must go on. Inch by inch we will gain ground. We will begin to feel and get real possessions, which no one can take away from us—the wealth that nobody can destroy, the joy that no misery can hurt any more.

Swami Vivekananda

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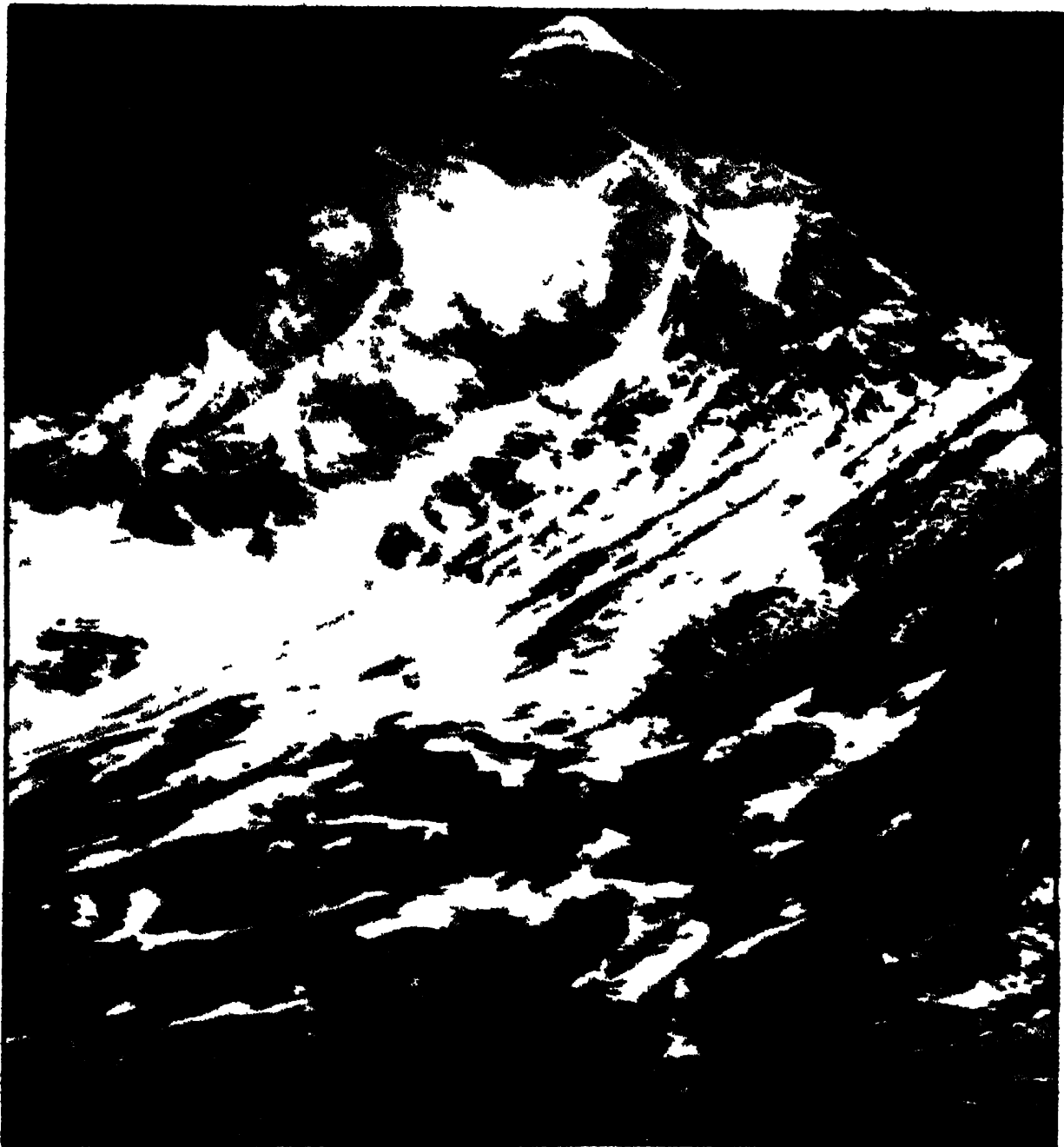
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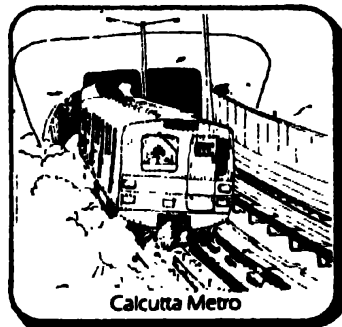
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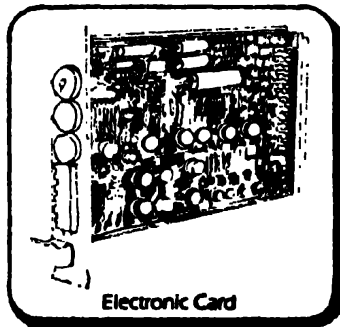
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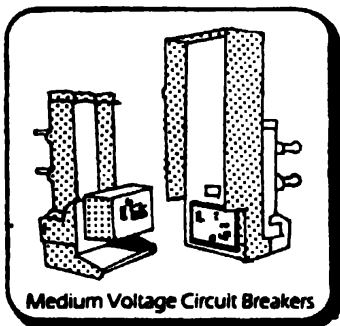
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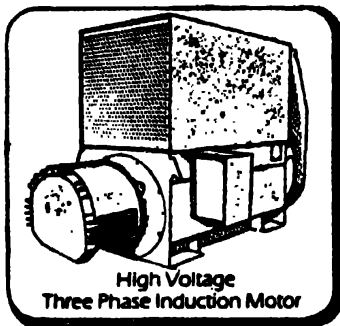
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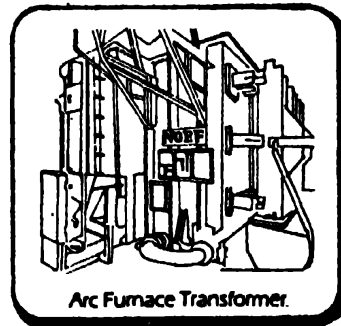
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AUGUST 1991

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DO NOT FIND FAULT WITH OTHERS
RATHER SEE YOUR OWN FAULTS.
Sri Sarada Devi**
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THE OTHERS ARE MORE DEAD THAN ALIVE.
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Work, work the idea, the plan, my boys, my brave, noble, good souls—to the wheel, to the wheel put your shoulders. Stop not to look back for name, or fame, or any such nonsense. Throw self overboard and work.

—Swami Vivekananda

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Arise! Awake!
And stop not till the Goal is reached.

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The Divine Message

THE SONG OF THE EVER-FREE

किं नाम रोदिषि सखे न च ते स्वरूपं
किं नाम रोदिषि सखे न च ते विरूपम् ।
किं नाम रोदिषि सखे न च ते वयांसि
ज्ञानामृतं समरसं गगनोपमोऽहम् ॥
Why do you weep, my friend ?
You have no form nor are you deformed.
Why do you weep, my friend ?
There is no aging for you.
I am Existence-Knowledge-Bliss and boundless as space.
किं नाम रोदिषि सखे न च ते वयांसि
किं नाम रोदिषि सखे न च ते मनांसि ।
किं नाम रोदिषि सखे न तवेन्द्रियाणि
ज्ञानामृतं समरसं गगनोपमोऽहम् ॥
Why do you weep, my friend ?
You have no physical or mental organism.
Why do you weep, my friend ?
You do not have any sense-organs.
I am Existence-Knowledge-Bliss and boundless as space.
किं नाम रोदिषि सखे न च तेऽस्ति कामः
किं नाम रोदिषि सखे न च ते प्रलोभः ।
किं नाम रोदिषि सखे न च ते विमोहो
ज्ञानामृतं समरसं गगनोपमोऽहम् ॥
Why do you weep, my friend ?
You have no lust or greed.
Why do you weep, my friend ?
You have no delusion.
I am Existence-Knowledge-Bliss and boundless as space.

from The Avadhuta Gita

Greatness of Ganesa

A legend says Sage Vyasa, having conceived the great epic *Mahābhārata* pondered over how to give the sacred story to mankind. He meditated on Brahmā, the Creator, who manifested before him. The great poet saluted Brahmā and prayed: "*Param na lekhaḥ kascid etasya bhuvi vidyate*"—"Lord, I have conceived an excellent work, but cannot think of an efficient writer who can take it down to my dictation."

Brahmā praised and blessed the Sage and said, "*Kavayasya lekhanārthāya Gaṇeśa-maryatām mune*"—"O Sage, invoke Gaṇapati and beg him to take your dictation." Saying this Brahmā disappeared. Vyasa meditated on the form of Ganesa who appeared before him. The Sage reverentially bowed to him and sought his help. "*Lekhako bhāratasya bhava tvam Gaṇanāyaka*"—"Lord Ganesa, I shall dictate the story of the *Mahābhārata*, and pray you be gracious to write it down."

Agreeing to Vyasa's suggestion, Ganesa replied: "Very well, I shall do as you wish. But my pen must not stop while I am writing. So you must dictate without pause. I can write only on this condition."

Vyasa acquiesced but wisely guarding himself, put a counter-condition: "*Tam devaṁ abudhvā mā likha kvacit*"—"Be it so, but you must first grasp the meaning of what I dictate before you write it down."

Gaṇapati accepted this stipulation, then the sage started to unfold the story of the epic. The *Mahābhārata* says, "*Sarvajño pi Gaṇeśo yat kṣaṇamāste vicārayan. Tāvaca-kūr Vyaso pi ślokananyān bahūnapī*"—"Vyasa would occasionally compose some complex verses which would make Ganeśa

pause awhile to grasp the meaning, and the Poet would avail himself of this interval to compose many verses in his mind." Due to the combined efforts of the celestial scribe and the inspired poet, Vyasa's *magnum opus*, *The Mahabharata*, took its final written form.

Sri Ramakrishna had the highest reverence for Ganesa. He often extolled the integrity of Ganesa's character, his total absence of passion, and his single-minded devotion to his mother, Goddess Durgā. Sri Ramakrishna used to cite the example of Ganesa to reiterate his own life-long filial attitude towards all women. When Ganesa was a child, one day in a playful but naughty mood he tormented and injured a cat. When he afterwards came to his mother, to his utter surprise and sorrow, he saw the marks of injury he had inflicted on the cat impressed on his mother's person. Very much pained, he asked the Devi the reason of it. Parvati then explained to her son, "My child, it is I who have become all beings. All female forms are part of me, and all male forms are part of Siva." Ganesa remembered these words of his mother forever. When he reached marriageable age, he refused to marry lest he should have to marry his mother. He maintained perfect *brahmacarya*, continence, and became foremost among the celestial beings. Thus narrating the greatness of Ganesa's illumination and his filial relation with all women without exception, the Master said: "My attitude to women is also the same; that is why I had the vision of the maternal form of the Universal Cause in my wedded wife and worshipped her and bowed at her feet."¹

1. Swami Saradananda, *The Great Master* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, 1978) p. 229.

Sri Ramakrishna also narrated in his inimitable way another story concerning Ganesa and his younger brother, Kartikeya. Parvati once offered a contest to both of her sons, showing them a precious necklace of gems of hers, "I shall give this garland of gems to the one who can circle the universe and come back to me first," she said. Kartikeya, with a smile, jumped on his swift vehicle, a peacock, sure of victory. He thought of his elder brother's bulky body, pot-belly and his slow carrier—a mouse. Triumph writ large on his beaming face, he set off, to be the first to finish the journey. With his divine sight, Ganesa knew that Siva and Sakti permeated the entire universe and contained it within themselves. So he unhurriedly, with his leisurely gait, went round Siva and Parvati, worshipped them, and quietly resumed his seat. Highly pleased with the devotion of her son of divine knowledge, Parvati placed affectionately the garland of gems on his neck. After a long while Kartikeya returned from circumambulating the universe.

Before hearing these stories from the Master, "we did not have," wrote Swami Saradananda, "much devotion to, and reverence for, this pot-bellied elephant-faced god with exudation flowing from his temples. But since we heard the story from the Master's holy mouth, we have the conviction that Ganesa was truly fit to be worshipped before all the gods, as indeed he is worshipped."²

Ganesa looked upon all women as the manifestation of the Divine Mother. He, therefore, is an ideal of *brahmacarya* and of sannyasins too. This was a conviction Swami Vivekananda also held. While initiating Swami Sadashivananda into *sannyāsa*, Swamiji gave him the following instructions for meditation: "Now think of Sri Rama-

krishna, and transform me into him, and then him into Ganesa. Ganesa is the ideal of *sannyāsa*."³

Generally this Ganesa form of the God-head is worshipped singly without a consort, as a *brahmacārin*. But in *Tantric* tradition, to uphold the supremacy of *Śakti*, he is shown with two of his symbolic consorts—*Buddhi* and *Siddhi*—the powers of Wisdom and Action, or *Jñāna-Śakti* and *Kriyā-Śakti*. The worship of this god falls on the fourth day of the bright fortnight in the month of *Bhādrapada* (August-September), conducted every year throughout India with much enthusiasm and gaiety. It usually precedes the worship of Durgā by about two months. Significantly, the festival of this deity coincides with the beginning of Vedic study afresh. Therefore, Ganeśa is known as the patron deity of learning and letters. Those who aspire to acquire knowledge—spiritual or secular, first invoke this deity to achieve success in their endeavours. He bestows *buddhi* (intelligence) in our hearts and *siddhi* (efficiency and success) for our outward actions. Gaṇapati personifies the lofty teaching of the *Bhagavad-Gita*: "*Samatvaṁ yoga ucyate...*"—"Yoga is unperturbed evenness of mind in all conditions." (II. 48) "*Yogaḥ karmasu kauśalam...*"... "Yoga is skill in action." (II. 50).

In life we require on the one hand, wisdom to guide us, and on the other, the transformation of that wisdom into skillful action. Mere intelligence without action is lame, as mere activity in the external world, without intelligence, is blind. A fruitful and meaningful life requires a prudent combination of these two. Our present civilization, for its prosperity and spiritual enlightenment, has to blend harmoniously these two ideals of *Jñānaśakti* and *Kriyāśakti* which this aspect of the godhead represents. Striving for

2. *Ibid.*, p. 227.

3. *Reminiscences of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1964) p. 413.

material prosperity is good and desirable, but not coupled with an exclusive hedonistic philosophy of life. To correct ills springing from such an attitude, spiritual insight is necessary, but not the shunning of material welfare. Hinduism in its heyday combined these two seemingly unbridgeable and incompatible powerful drives of life. *Vaiśeṣika Sūtra* of Kaṇāda (third century B.C.) suggests *Abhyudaya*—material progress, and *Niḥsreyasa*—the highest spiritual good, for man. History records that when Indian society was permeated with profound spiritual values, there was also material prosperity as well as an efflorescence in cultural life.

Wealth accumulated in the hand of a few has led to all kinds of injustice, heartless exploitation, and has reduced the majority of mankind to the condition of bare survival. Wealth, if not properly put to the use of human welfare, becomes destructive of peace. *Buddhi*, therefore, the light of rational intuition, is to control the monster of greed and covetousness. When distribution of wealth has not been set right voluntarily by the wealthy class, ruthless revolutions have drenched nations with blood. Commenting upon the predicament of modern human society, Dr. Radhakrishnan writes:

We have a world of rationalistic prophets, of selfish individualists, of a monstrous economic system compounded out of industrialism and capitalism, of vast technical achievements and external conquests, of continual craving for creature comforts and love of luxury, of unbridled and endless covetousness in public life, of dictatorship, of blood and brutality, anxious to make the world a shamble, dripping with human blood, of atheism, and disdain for the soul, a world in which nothing is certain and men have lost assurance."⁴

4. *Contemporary Indian Philosophy*, Edited by Radhakrishnan & Muirhead (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1952) p. 266.

Wisdom or spiritual insight can alone rescue us from this whirlpool. With the *Advaita buddhi* of oneness enshrined in our heart, and the *siddhi* fulfilment of our global civilization based on spiritual humanism, equilibrium can be regained. Such civilization alone can help everyone to manifest the inner divinity and rediscover the God-nature within. This is the goal of human life. Gaṇeśa, from his divine insight, showed that the Universal Mother is the Source of this manifested universe.

The upsurge and spread of materialistic philosophy in any age has neither been sudden nor the result of spurt of affluence. It is but a reaction. When spirituality of religion loses the seal of experience and authenticity and indulges in empty speculations, theological dogmas, tries to imprison the mind in a plethora of ungrounded beliefs and rituals, it becomes oppressive. It is a fossilized religion, which has lost its vitality and dynamism. Instead of spiritual authenticity, when thoughtless authoritarianism casts its ugly shadows to engulf the intellectual independence of man and suppresses free enquiry, the resultant response of society would be a revolt or rejection of religion. In the post-Upaniṣadic period the iconoclastic *Cārvākas*, Indian materialists, raised their voice against stultifying ceremonials and rituals, against the sacerdotal authority. The outburst of this movement stirred man from his intellectual slumbers and spawned awakening to question the ossified religious traditions. As if an answer to this confusion and turmoil, Mahavir and Buddha rose to placate the hearts of people. Due to such inflexible framework and rigid fundamentalism, Christianity in the West is losing some of the tightness of its grip, and a feeble pleading voice is heard in Egypt and some of the other Arab countries to reinterpret the Islamic theology.

In the nineteenth century the stagnation

accumulated over the centuries erupted once again in India, shaking the foundation of religion. The militant atheism of new-Cārvākas threatened to sweep the country and posed a mighty challenge. In response, Sri Ramakrishna, Vivekananda, and others appeared to revitalize the sagging spirit of the times, and resuscitate the race caught in the throes of death. In the words of Swamiji, it was, "...a state of stagnation, rather than a towing ahead; a state of suffering more than of doing..."⁵ Sri Ramakrishna's life showed once again what true religion is. "Religion is realization," reminded Swamiji in thundering voice, "not talk, nor doctrine, nor theories—however beautiful they may be. It is being and becoming, not hearing and acknowledging; it is the whole soul becoming changed into what it believes. That is religion."⁶

The all-round growth of human society can be possible only when that spiritual realization (*buddhi*) transforms itself into fruitful work (*siddhi*)—when people become morally good and industrious. Spirituality is not passivity nor is it a pretext for inactivity. In India, for centuries we have been misled to think that religion means abstinence from work. For this mass hypnotism we have paid the price—poverty. Spiritual persons have always been active—not the slavish activity prompted by desires, but in tireless working for the welfare of mankind. Till his last breath, though he suffered from unbearable pain of throat cancer, Sri Ramakrishna did not turn away a single soul in need of help. What nobler example can one cite of the Gita's perfect *karma-yoga* than that of Sri Sarada Devi! In spite of many ailments, and body shattered by incessant work, Swami Vivekananda never thought of a

moment's respite from his mission, inspiring and guiding people all over the world. It is Vivekananda, leader of mankind, who in the modern world revived the sublime qualities of Vināyaka. It is Vivekananda who brought down the precious truths of the Upaniṣads and taught us to apply them in our day-to-day life—which he called Practical or applied Vedanta. The test of truth is that it must lift us from our weal and woe, fear and weakness, selfishness and greed, and finally help us to take responsibility on our own shoulders. When we take the responsibility to shape our own destiny all the blessings from all gods and angels will be on our heads. Truth must broaden our minds, expand our hearts and strengthen our hands. Truth is religion. In the words of Swamiji, "The fictitious differentiation between religion and the life of the world must vanish."⁷

Illumining this vital theme he continued, "The ideals of religion must cover the whole field of life, they must enter into all our thoughts, and more and more into practice."⁸ Religion, to help mankind, must be ready and able to help him in whatever condition he is, in servitude, or in freedom, in the depths of degradation or on the heights of purity; everywhere, equally, it should be able to come to his aid.⁹

"The power of religion, broadened and purified, is going to penetrate every part of human life. So long as religion was in the hands of a chosen few, or of a body of priests, it was in temples, churches, books, dogmas, ceremonials, forms, and rituals. But when we come to real, spiritual, universal application, then and then alone, religion will become real and living; it will come into our very nature, live in our every move-

5. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989) Vol. IV, p. 140.

6. *Ibid.*, Vol. II p. 396.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 291.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 291.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 300.

ment, penetrate every pore of our society, and be infinitely more a power for good, than it has ever been before."¹⁰

Human excellence requires both spiritual knowledge (*buddhi*) and accomplishment (*siddhi*). Finding peace—bliss for oneself, the ideal of the East, is not enough. That peace should find a way to assuage the suffering of hearts everywhere. Acquisition of wealth for immediate happiness, the ideal of the West, is equally inadequate. It should provide food for the millions who are going hungry every day. In India religion must find effective expression in action, and in the West, the dexterity in action must be suffused with spiritual insight. Wisdom should control the play of mind and senses. *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* says: "*Buddhīntu sārathīm viddhi, manah pragraham eva ca*"—"Know the intellect as the charioteer and the mind, the reins." (I.3.3.) Vivekananda represented both these essential qualities—self respect, self-reliance, and the highest realization of truth. "Vivekananda," says Swami Ranganathananda,

both taught and exemplified in his life that the confluence of these two types of excellence constitutes true human excellence and total human fulfilment. Realizing the complementary nature of these two excellences, the power to act and the power to be, the power to reason and the power to worship, Vivekananda treats manliness as an essential requisite of spiritual life.¹¹

This comprehensive philosophy of life which Ganesa embodies, Vivekananda taught. His inspiring life and message have yet to enter fully into the bloodstream of this nation. Though there has been conflict

between traditional beliefs and new scientific attitudes, yet out of this purifying crucible will emerge an integrated vision fulfilling the prophesy of Swamiji. Science and religion, work and meditation, technology and humanist concern, will sustain each other. Thoughtful persons in the world are realizing that they have to be not only intensely practical in providing physical comforts, but also are in desperate need of the fulfilments offered by spiritual knowledge. These twin aspects find their wonderful expression in the mantra, "*Ātmano mokṣārtham (buddhi), Jagaddhitāya ca (siddhi)*"—"One's own spiritual freedom and the welfare of the world."

"India has to learn," advises Vivekananda, "from Europe the conquest of external nature, and Europe has to learn from India the conquest of internal nature. Then there will be neither Hindus nor Europeans—there will be the ideal humanity which has conquered both the natures, the external and the internal. ...The word freedom, which is the watchword of our religion, really means freedom physically, mentally and spiritually."¹²

If Ganesa were to speak, the refrain of his advice to spiritual aspirants would be like Vivekananda's—"Be up and achieve some thing, do not just sit idly, hoping; I am Vighneśwar, Remover of obstacles; I vouchsafe success to you in self-effort." It is through the Lord's grace that one is prompted to make self-efforts. Had Ganesa been idle he would have sat lazily, either blaming his slow carrier, or excusing himself from labour owing to the bulkiness of his body, when his mother Durgā asked him to circle the universe. But immediately he was up and achieved his aim with boldness and supreme wisdom. He is, therefore, the supernal representation of wisdom in action,

10. *Ibid.*, p. 68.

11. Swami Ranganathananda, *Swami Vivekananda and Human Excellence* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1990) p. 41.

12. *Complete Works*, Vol V, p. 216.

intelligence and self-effort. Human beings have to imbibe his great example and be manly to face difficulties and hardships. A brave person encounters obstacles and overcomes them because he invests all his energies and concentrates on the task before him. A stone never feels any difficulties. Growth means overcoming all those counter-forces which try to thwart it. The grace of Ganesa descends on such a person who is steadfast in his efforts and invincible in his faith.

Ironically, the profound significance of worship of this gentle deity, Ganesa, is too often obscured in witless din and bustle, or is smothered in the mechanical performance of sacred ritual. Without purity and efficiency, intelligence and self-effort, none can propitiate the powerful Ganesa. He is not deceived by the worship of unscrupulous persons, by dilatory students, or by those who procrastinate or shirk their duties. He is the Indwelling Spirit and knows all secret thoughts and desires. Worship of such Deity has nowadays become a lifeless affair, rather an event of entertainment. The usual way with people is to degrade any high ideal and

bring it down to their sensuous level. This phenomenon, unfortunately, is common all over the world. To appreciate lofty truth requires high spiritual culture and intellectual maturity. When spirituality turns into mere amusement—in any culture—the decadence of that race is inevitable. In India, whether it be Śivarātri, Durgā Pūjā, or *Ganeśa-Caturthī*, the unfailing feature of all these religious celebrations is an utter excess of noise, chaos and pandemonium. Such is the travesty of truth! The same casual attitude, we Indians display in every field of life. Our disorderly, dirty roads, bus and railway stations, temples and places of pilgrimage, public parks and offices, parliament buildings and state assemblies, and our educational institutions, reflect sadly our chaotic mind. The gods we worship with faith and devotion, in truth, are the embodiments of great principles—of love, care, industry and efficiency. We only worship the forms and keep ourselves miles away from practising those qualities ourselves! How many epochs of time will have to pass for us to learn!

(to be concluded)

Never talk about the faults of others, no matter how bad they may be. Nothing is ever gained by that. You never help one by talking about his faults; you do him an injury, and injure yourself as well....We have seen that it is the subjective world that rules the objective. Change the subject, and the object is bound to change; purify yourself, and the world is bound to be purified. This one thing requires to be taught now more than ever before. We are becoming more and more busy about our neighbours and less and less about ourselves. The world will change if we change; if we are pure, the world will become pure.

—Swami Vivekananda

The Indian Vision Of God as Mother

SWAMI RANGANATHANANDA

Motherhood of God infuses the sweet filial relationship more than any other conception of Divinity. Therefore it has captivated the hearts of East and West alike for millennia. The masterly exposition is based on the speech by Revered Swamiji, who is a Vice-President of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission.

1. Introduction

In the West today, there is great interest in this wonderful idea that we speak of, and an approach to God as Mother, not only as Father. In fact, since the post-second world war years, big changes have been going on in Western religious thinking. Imagine the Christian church in America, Presbyterian or Methodist, passing a resolution that God can be called hereafter not only as Father but also as Mother. It is against the whole tradition of the two thousand years of Christian history. In all Semitic religions—Jewish, Christian, and Islamic, Father is the supreme word for God and Mother has no place there. But the concept of God as Mother was present in the various cults that existed in the Mediterranean region; all such cults were destroyed by Judaism and Christianity.

2. Evolution of the Mother Cults in India

Only in India were the original Mother cults preserved and developed and eventually given a very high status throughout our history. We can see the blending of the pre-Vedic Mother cults and the Vedic Father cults, and of the two peoples following these cults, mingling and merging in a few centuries to become the Indian culture and the Indian people. With the touch of the philosophy

of Advaita Vedanta, our Indian Mother cults developed into the full Śākta religion and spirituality, and spread to all parts of India in its Śaiva, Vaiṣṇava, and Śākta forms, turning out devotees and teachers, simple as well as extraordinary, one of the greatest of whom was Śaṅkarācārya. This great Advaita teacher stressed this concept of God as Mother about twelve hundred years ago, and today we have in Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother Sarada Devi, and Swami Vivekananda, great teachers who have highlighted this idea once again. This truth is having increasing appeal to people in many parts of the world, that, behind this universe, there is a pulse of the Mother-heart; the pulse of the energy of compassion, love, and protective attitude—all that is associated with the idea of Mother.

Our great sages discovered the pulse of that Śakti, of that Prakṛti, of that Mother-heart, behind the universe. So they spoke and sang of God as Mother, as *Parā Śakti*, the Supreme Energy—*Parā Prakṛti*, the Supreme Nature, and Her unique manifestations as *Durgā*, *Kālī*, *Devī*, and *Rādhā*. India has cultured it throughout the ages. India speaks of God as Father; India speaks of God as Mother; India also speaks of God in the neuter, as 'It', as *Brahman*, as *Om Tat Sat*. Brahman is beyond all 'he' or 'she'. India presents the human soul also as essentially the sexless Self, on the realization of which truth, every man or woman trans-

* Based on a lecture delivered by Revered Swamiji at the Ramakrishna Math, Tiruvananthapuram, Kerala.

cends the limitations of masculinity and femininity which it relegates to the physical body. Some of the great writers in English, German, and other languages have also sometimes given a hint of the presence of this Mother-heart behind the universe. One of them is the famous German poet and dramatist Goethe in his famous book, *Faust*. The last line of that book is wonderful: "*The Eternal Feminine leads us on and on.*"

What a beautiful expression! There is an eternal feminine behind us, behind the passing manifestations of the world, and behind all the world's masculine and feminine. Another Western poet is Walt Whitman of America, who sings an invocation to the Divine Mother in his *Leaves of Grass* (Everyman's Library Edition, 1927, p. 279):

"Dark Mother, always gliding near with
soft feet,
Have none chanted for Thee a chant of
fullest welcome?
Then I chant it for Thee, I glorify thee
above all,
I bring Thee a song that, when Thou must
indeed come,
Come unflinching."

So everywhere, the concept of God as Mother has influenced human thinking, though it had to face suppression by powerful official church hierarchies in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Though suppressed again and again, it has raised its head again and again. The only country where it was not only not suppressed, but cultivated assiduously by great saints, sages, and thinkers, apart from the mass of the people, is India. That is why the whole subject of God as Mother gets a new strength by understanding India's approach to it.

3. *The Mother Goddess and the Current Women's Liberation Movement in the West*

One factor that is making for the prominence of this particular belief in God as Mother in the West is, what is called, the Women's Liberation Movement. Immense is its repercussions on all aspects of Western life, particularly in America. For centuries, everything in Western life and literature and religion was masculine-dominated; but after the Second World War, the protest against all this gender bias, as it is now called, set in and evolved soon into the current Women's Liberation Movement. During the last short twenty-five years of its existence, it has had its ups and downs, searching and probing for what exactly this liberation meant, and throwing up a plethora of books and distinguished leaders by the American womanhood. The movement got an impetus and shape and direction when Betty Friedan wrote her famous book *The Feminine Mystique* in 1963, wherein she exhorted women not to be mere extensions of men; she and her colleagues also started for this purpose the NOW organization (National Organization of Women). That very author has recently written a new book in 1982, *The Second Stage*, the front page of which contains this *Sunday Times* reference to the author: "The most influential feminist of the last twenty years", and mentions her reassessment of the failures and successes of the movement. It registers the disappointment of the author for not getting the blessings to American women promised by the liberation movement even after twenty years. Making a distinction between feminine and feminist, she says (pp. 27-28):

"I believe that we have to break through our own *feminist* mystique now to come to terms with the new reality of our personal and political experience, and to move into the second stage..."

"*The second stage cannot be seen in terms of women alone, our separate personhood or equality with men.*"

"The second stage involves coming to new terms with the family—new terms with love and with work.

"The second stage may not even be a women's movement. Men may be at the cutting edge of the second stage.

"The second stage has to transcend the battle for equal power in Institutions. The second stage will restructure institutions and transform the nature of power itself." (italics by the author)

That conclusion has come from the great author of *The Feminine Mystique*, and she says now that the family must be kept intact and that there is no liberation for women without involving men also in the process.

Side by side with the efforts for women's liberation in the socio-political sphere, there has come the struggle to remove all gender bias in religion also. Why God should be described only as masculine, as the Father; why not speak of God in feminine terms, as the Mother? So books on the subject by women authors are coming out in a steady stream now in America. These books endeavour to revive the concepts of the Mother Goddess upheld in all pre-Christian religions, which were considered as superstitious by the Christian church and were wiped away; but now they are being revived once again. Naturally, the Western mind turns to India which has cultured and nurtured the whole range of the Mother Goddess cults all these centuries through authoritative books and theology and rituals. Books on God as Mother, as understood in India, are thus coming out in the English language. It is an extraordinary development; and one good thing that is revealed in these books is that, whereas, formerly, Western authors used to write scholarly books, but with little or no respect for our religious ideas—even belittling religion often—today they write with sympathy, appreciation, and even *bhakti*.

The following three books reveal this changed attitude. They reveal also the increasing Western interest in the concept of God as Mother:

1. —*God as Mother: A Feminine Theology in India, A Historical and Theological Study of the Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa*, by Cheever Mackenzie Brown, Foreword by Daniel H. H. Ingalls (published by Claude Stark & Co., Hartford, Vermont—05047, U.S.A., first printing 1974). The inner page vii carries this reverential inscription:

"To my parents, true aṁsās of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa."

In his *Foreword*, Ingalls says (p. xiv):

"What is strange about this Indian record is not so much the replacement of female by male heirophanies, a phenomenon that has occurred over most of the civilized world, as the fact that in India the Goddess reappears. In Mediterranean culture, her embodiments disappeared for good. Diana and Bercynthia, Isis and Cybele, were exiled with the coming of Christianity. Somewhat later, Islam was to prove as severe. Tabari tells us that the Prophet at first spoke of the principal goddesses of Mecca as "holy beings whose intercession is to be sought", but that these words were later expunged from the *Qur'an*. What we actually have in *Qur'an* 54-19-23 is an attribution of such statements to Satan, and the Prophet's followers continued to be intransigently masculine in outlook. In Christianity, female heirophanies reappeared in the figures of Mary and the female saints. But here one cannot speak of a reappearance of ancient Goddesses. The figure of the virgin and its supporting theology are subordinate to those of her son and his father. Diana is as surely dead as are the *puellae et pueri integri* who sang her praise."

The author, Cheever, begins his *Introduction* to his book with these words:

"Recently, it seems, theologians in the West have seriously begun to ponder whether the ultimate reality in the universe is male or female, or somehow includes or transcends both. What difference, we may ask ourselves, would it make to us personally if the supreme Reality were a Woman, instead of a Man, or some union of the two? How would it affect our faith, our attitudes and conduct towards men and women in our everyday lives, our ultimate fate? Would it alter our perception of the relationship of man and nature, spirit and matter, mind and body, intellect and feelings, subject and object? Such diverse concerns are more interrelated than they may at first appear. In any case, many Hindu thinkers, teachers, and writers, from at least the early Christian centuries, have deeply involved themselves with the problem of the feminine and masculine dimensions of ultimate reality and their ramifications within different aspects of life."

2. —*Devī Māhātmya: The Crystalization of the Goddess tradition*, by Thomas B. Coburn, with a Foreword by Daniel H. H. Ingalls, published by Motilal Banarasi Dass, Delhi, First Edition: 1984, Reprinted: 1988.

The author commences his *Prolegomena* to his book thus:

"The central concern of this study is with a text from classical India. More specifically, it is with the vision of the ultimate reality in the universe that is articulated in the *Devī Māhātmya* (DM). ...The outstanding feature of its vision is that the ultimate reality is understood as female, as the Goddess."

3. —*The Politics of Women's Spirituality: Essays on the Rise of Spiritual Power within the Feminist Movement* (Edited by Charlene Spretnak, Anchor Books, Doubleday, New York, 1982).

The author writes in the *Introduction* (Ibid., p. xxiii):

The title, "*The Politics of Women's Spirituality*" refers to our attitude toward life on Earth (i.e., spirituality) and the perception, manifestation, and use of power (i.e. politics) that stem from that attitude. The world-view inherent in feminist spirituality is, like the female mind, holistic and integrative. We see *connectedness* where the patriarchal mentality insists on seeing only separations. An excellent example of the integrative approach to issues was the unity statement of the Women's Pentagon Action in November 1980, which addressed the network of horrors that flow from patriarchal values, the domination and exploitation of "the other": foreign countries, women, minorities, and the earth (see "*Spiritual Dimensions of Feminist Anti-nuclear Activism*").

In the the first chapter on "*What the Goddess Means to Women*", Charlene Spretnak writes (pp. 5-6):

"Being a retired Catholic with an interest in Buddhist meditation, I attempted to express my feelings about spirituality and nearly always they would ask, 'Do you have a book?' They felt that a holy book of any sort...would signify legitimacy. Sometimes I sense that same reaction among contemporary theologians, and people in general, toward Goddess spirituality...to which I respond: 'We are older, much older, than books.'

"Many of the sacred myths of the Goddess that were told by our pre-patriarchal ancestors have survived and are now being gathered into books, although much of the Old Religion has been destroyed during the suppression of the patriarchal era. Ancient Mirrors of Womanhood: Our Goddess and Heroine Heritage and Lost Goddesses of Early Greece are examples of such collections. To sift through the surviving fragments of the ancient Goddess spirituality is a sobering experience. How close we came

to losing that wisdom forever, to believing the patriarchal assertions that their politics of separation are the natural—the only—way to live.

"Patriarchal governments and religions regard the current Goddess revival with deep-seated fear. Nothing threatens their power structure so resoundingly as the ancient consciousness that they believed had been crushed...."

"Feminists do not claim to own the Goddess. She has meaning for all people as a symbol of the holistic nature of life on Earth, in which all forms of being are intrinsically linked and are one (see Introduction). She also has special meaning for women as an expression of the power of the female body/mind. As such, it is not difficult to deduce why almost none of the history presented in the following selections appears in patriarchal textbooks. I am not suggesting a 'conspiracy' among scholars but, rather, a pervasive cultural attitude that all pre-patriarchal religions were less worthy than the Judeo-Christian system. For example, one never reads of 'the religion of Artemis' and 'the cult of Jesus'; it is always the other way round. Similarly, the ancient Near Eastern words for 'sanctified women' or 'holy women' were translated by patriarchal scholars as 'temple prostitutes'...."

"Contemporary Goddess spirituality, with its roots in pre-patriarchal culture, embodies a multiplicity of meaning for women. She is ever, she is all, she is us." (italics by Charlene Spretnak)

In her earlier book *Lost Goddesses of Early Greece, A Collection of Pre-hellenic Myths*, Beacon Press, Boston, 1981, Charlene had quoted from Gunther Zuntz's book: *Persephone—Three Essays on Religion and Thought in Magna Graecia* (p. 12):

"To be gripped by the realization of deity in woman, the spring and harbor of life,

mankind did not have to wait for the invention of agriculture. Everywhere, from Spain to Siberia, so many palaeolithic documents of this devotion have emerged, and with traits so specific recurring in neolithic relics, as to forbid the facile' inference that this change, however epochal, in man's living habits could by itself account for what is loosely called 'the cult of the Mother Goddess'. ...What evidence there is—and it is not a little—points to concerns more comprehensive and profound. This is the oldest godhead perceived by mankind."

Charlene dedicates this book of hers significantly thus: *"for our foremothers from the beginning"*.

4. India Sings the Glory of the Divine Mother

Coburn's book is a scholarly presentation of India's best song on the *māhātmya* (glory) of the Devī, the Divine Mother. There is no doubt that the presentation of this subject of Divine Motherhood in the ancient and later Indian culture, and in Sri Ramakrishna, the Holy Mother Sarada Devi, and Swami Vivekananda in the modern age, will have a great appeal to the Western mind in the coming decades. It is interesting to note from the report published in an American Journal that the American churches have recently published a new edition of the *Holy Bible* eliminating all gender bias with respect to God and have added the word Mother to wherever the word Father occurs.

Sister Nivedita quotes Swami Vivekananda's words about the reality of the Divine Mother (*The Master as I Saw Him*, p. 170):

"You see, I cannot but believe that there is somewhere a great power that thinks of Herself as feminine, and called Kālī, and Mother. ...And I believe in Brahman, too."

(Continued on page 348)

The Mother of All

SWAMI ATMASTHANANDA

(continued from the previous issue)

How did Holy Mother receive those hapless souls who were looked down upon and spurned by highbrow society?—is the touching subject matter of this concluding part.

The Holy Mother was the Mother of actors and actresses too. Among them Binode Behari Som, known popularly as 'Padmabinode', had, as a student in M's school, received the blessings of Sri Ramakrishna. He acquired fame for his acting in "Praphulla", "Macbeth", and other plays, but was addicted to heavy drinking. Every night when he passed by Mother's house on his way home he was fully intoxicated. He would sometimes call loudly to his 'dost' (chum), Swami Saradananda. On the Swami's orders, however, nobody in Mother's house responded to him. One night, standing in the street outside, Padmabinode started singing with great fervour the song beginning with the line "*O compassionate Mother, wake up! Open the door of your cottage...*" Hearing this beautiful song which expresses the pathetic cry of a forlorn child for its mother, the Holy Mother could not contain herself. She got up, rolled up the blind and opened the window. The reeling Padmabinode then exclaimed in joy: "Have you got up, Mother? Have you heard your son's call? Now accept this salutation of mine." So saying, he began to roll prostrate on the street. Then singing the refrain of another song, with a jibe at his 'dost', Padmabinode went away, overjoyed at the kindness of the Mother. The whole episode was re-enacted on more than one occasion.

At the invitation of Girish Chandra Ghosh, the Holy Mother went to his Star Theatre, as Sri Ramakrishna had earlier done. She

saw the dramatic performances "Vilva-mangal", "Pāṇḍava-gaurav", and one or two others. Once Girish, unable to bear so many sufferings of life, approached the Mother for permission to renounce the world. He used all his skill in reason and persuasiveness to convince the Mother that the time was ripe for him, but she remained unmoved and did not allow him to become a sannyāsin. When Holy Mother visited Girish's home during Durgā Pūjā, all of the actresses and actors of the Star Theatre came to touch her holy feet and receive her blessings. Once the Mother went to the Minerva Theatre at the instance of the actor, Aparesh Mukhopadhyay, to see the drama "Rāmānuja". The actress Niradasundari played an important role in it. After the play the Mother wanted to meet her, and the actress came hurriedly to Holy Mother, still wearing her costume and makeup. The Mother embraced her daughter warmly. This overwhelmed the poor actress who had never received such pure and genuine affection in her life. Another renowned actor, Amritlal, used to say openly that the Holy Mother was his greatest inspiration as an actor. In a poem he wrote: "*Infusing power in the hearts of people, wielding freely the pen [of destiny], you have taught the song of divine sport to so many.*" Once the actress Tarasundari came to Udbodhan to meet Holy Mother. While she was there, at the Mother's instance she impersonated a male character in the drama "Jana" and entertained the ladies with

her acting. The Mother treated her as her own daughter. Another actress, Tinkori, who played the role of a crazy woman in "Vilvamangal", also used to come to the Holy Mother. Once the Mother wanted her to sing, and she sang the song of the crazy woman which began, "*Lead me by holding my hand...*" The Mother was deeply moved by the soulful song and exclaimed, "My daughter, what a wonderful song you have sung!" Whenever these women who were looked down upon by cultured society came the Mother would personally arrange that they were fed sumptuously, and after the meal she herself would give them betel-nut with spices (*pān*). The actor Aparesh Chandra wrote:

"Ordinary people look at only the outer cover ; God looks at the inner stuff. And it is precisely because God alone sees the inner life of man that I myself have been able to see this fact ; the compassion of the Mother of all the devotees of Sri Ramakrishna, my beloved Mother who took on to her lap fallen women, the actresses of theatres—that compassion knows no boundaries and distinctions, that compassion does not honour any rule or law, that compassion does not discriminate between the fit and the unfit, the thorny thistle and flowering herb, but purifies, sanctifies and divinizes whomsoever it touches."

A young initiated disciple of the Holy Mother belonged to the low caste of *Yugis*. Therefore he hesitated to move freely in the Mother's home at Jayrambati and this did not escape the notice of the Mother. One day she said to him: "Why do you hesitate just because you are a *Yugi*? What of that, my son? You belong to the Master's fold. You are a child of his family, so just you think that you have come to your own family." The Mother used the endearing expression "*gharer chele*" (child of the

family). It shows how she could make herself near and dear even to people in all walks of life. On another occasion, during the auspicious second day worship of the Durgā Pūjā, devotees started making offerings of flowers at her feet. One man was seen, however, to stand aloof. The Mother learned that he had come from Tajpore and belonged to the lowly *Bāgdi* caste. She asked him graciously to offer flowers, and he cheerfully complied. When the Mother was staying at Kamarpukur (soon after the passing away of Sri Ramakrishna) a maidservant known by the name 'Sagar's Mother' used to do shopping and some odd jobs for her. The Mother used to keep aside a portion of the noon meal for Sagar's Mother, and when she came, Mother would hand it to her saying affectionately, "Put this in your mouth first and drink some water, and then begin your work." When the Holy Mother stayed at Koalpara Jagadamba Ashrama a very poor woman belonging to the *Dome* caste sought her help. She had been abandoned by the man with whom she had been living. The Mother sent for the man and reprimanded him in a gentle voice, "She has sacrificed everything for your sake," she told him, "and you too have accepted her service so far. Now if you abandon her, you will be committing a great sin and won't get refuge even in hell." These words, charged with Mother-power, brought about a change in the man and he accepted the woman once again. The Holy Mother's attendant Swami Saradeshananda has written:

At the Mother's house [in Jayrambati] fishermen, fishmongers, whoever went there, everyone of them was Mother's son or daughter. They all got the same loving attention as did the devotees and disciples. That compassionate, loving look of the Mother nobody can ever forget, either in this world or in the next world. Even if one forgets it for some time, as soon as

difficulties arise in life, that tender look will flash in one's mind once again."

Sri Sarada Devi was thus the Mother of the lowly and down-trodden.

The Mother's love was not restricted to human beings alone; it embraced all living beings. She felt herself to be Mother also to lowly creatures—cats, parrots, cows and all—not in a metaphorical sense, nor in an artificial way. It was natural and spontaneous with her, like the air that she breathed. She could not bear to see even a cat ill-treated. Radhu had a pet cat which used to remain at the Mother's feet free of all fear. She would keep apart one cup of milk for it every day. The cat, however, used to surreptitiously enter into the kitchen and eat things stealthily. For this, some of the disciples of the Mother would occasionally strike the cat, which pained the Mother very much. She would say, "Stealing is its inborn nature, my son. Who will feed it with love and care?" Once while leaving for Calcutta, she told Brahmachari Jnan: "Look, Jnan, don't beat the cat; I dwell in the cat also." There was in the Mother's house a talking Myna (a kind of starling). It was called by the name Gangaram. Mother herself used to give it food and water, and water for its bath every day. Whenever she would approach its cage, it too would cry "Mother! Mother!" The Holy Mother treated even ordinary inanimate things with respect. In her eyes everything in the universe had its inherent value and dignity in the divine plan. A woman was sweeping the courtyard at Jayrambati. After she finished she threw aside her broom somewhat carelessly. The Mother saw it and pointed out to her the need for regarding all work as sacred, and the importance of doing work with care and alertness. Being herself the Fount of Śakti, she saw everything as a manifestation of that Divine Power.

It is true that the Holy Mother had had a foretaste of motherhood even during her stay with Sri Ramakrishna at Dakshineswar by caring for the young disciples of the Master like Latu, Rakhal, Baburam, Purna and others. But her heart was not completely satisfied with that. Once in a while when she was living alone at Kamarpukur, the thought would occur to her, "I have no son, and nothing else; who knows what is in store in the future?" One day the Master appeared to her in a vision and said, "Why do you worry? You want one son, but I have left for you all these jewels of sons. In time so many will address you as mother." On an earlier occasion, when Sarada Devi's mother Shyamasundari lamented in Sri Ramakrishna's hearing that her daughter would never hear anyone call her by the sweet name, mother, the Master said to her: "Dear mother-in-law, you need have no disappointment on that score. The time will come when so many children will call her 'Mother' that she will be unable to bear it... you will see this come true." These prophetic words of the Master actually did come to be literally fulfilled. Men and women, young and old, rich and poor, monks and lay-persons, saints and sinners—hundreds of them thronged to her presence. For those scorched in the midday sun of worldly suffering, she was like the cool light of the moon. Their suffering became her own. The cry of suffering humanity followed her like a shadow wherever she went. She did everything in her power to relieve sufferings of people around her. She gave everyone refuge in her lap and suffered vicariously for them. The world has never seen human love of that divine magnitude and intensity. That love knew no distinctions, no bounds. It was pure, unconditional and ever free. It asked nothing in return but gave itself freely to one and all.

Here is a wonderful new phenomenon. According to certain schools of Vaiṣṇavism,

Sri Krishna is not an Avatara but the Lord Himself, the Origin of all Avataras. Sri Ramakrishna can be regarded as the Incarnation of Divine Mother Kali. In that case Mother Kali and Mother Sarada Devi may be regarded as one. If this view is accepted, then the Holy Mother becomes the Originator of the Avatara of the present age. This is, perhaps, the reason why in Sri Ramakrishna one finds prevailing so much modesty, sweetness, and the attempt to establish *Dharma* through peaceful means, without any inclination to punish the wicked. This new Incarnation of Mother-Power redeems people by transforming their consciousness, by giving a Godward turn to their evil propensities, and hence, no need to destroy the wicked.

So this is the new Gospel, the new Message, the new Hope for the modern age: this time the Divine Mother of the universe Herself has assumed the dual forms of Sri Ramakrishna and Sri Sarada Devi, to uplift humanity and lead them along the path of truth to the Ultimate Reality and ultimate fulfilment. The boundless motherhood, the inexhaustible Mother-Power, the limitless compassion and blessedness of the Divine Mother of the universe has this time assumed the human form of the Holy Mother. This

is what, in the final analysis, makes Sri Sarada Devi the Mother of All.

The God of All, Sri Ramakrishna, used to climb to the roof of Rani Rasmani's house to call out his future disciples. This Mother of All gave this assurance through the *Devī-Sūkta*:

*Ahaṁ rāṣṭrī sangamanī vasūnām
Cikituṣī prathamā yajñayānām
Tām mā devāḥ vyadadhuh purutrā
Bhūristhātrām bhūryāveśayanīm*

I am the Queen Regnant of the whole universe, the Bestower of wealth, the Supreme Power and hence the prime Object of all oblations. It is Me that the gods and sages worship in various ways. I manifest myself in myriad forms and exist in all beings as the Soul of all souls.

It was this sublime, transcendental, supreme Truth of Divine Mother-hood that the Holy Mother Sarada Devi tried to manifest in every small act of her life, unobtrusively, spontaneously, behind the veil of unparalleled, we may say, superhuman modesty. The pure love of her great Heart is now in flow tide. And her divine assurance, "Always remember, my child, that you have a Mother" has begun to reverberate even in the distant corners of the world. Glory unto the Mother!

This is the first lesson to learn ; be determined not to curse anything outside, not to lay blame upon anyone outside ; but be a man, stand up, lay the blame on yourself. You will find that is always true.

—Swami Vivekananda

Swami Vivekananda and The Imitation of Christ

PRAVRAJIKA BRAHMAPRANA

(Continued from the previous issue)

Not only was Swami Vivekananda captivated by Thomas à Kempis's expression of *dasya bhakti* in *The Imitation of Christ*, but the "reader's heart," he wrote:

will be profoundly stirred by the author's thoughts of burning renunciation, marvellous surrender, and deep sense of dependence on the will of God.¹

It may well be said that of all books, *The Imitation of Christ* had one of the most profound influences on the life of Swami Vivekananda. The influence of that book, carried with him throughout India—read and reread, studied, memorized, and meditated upon—deepened the Swami's own devotion to Christ, giving him an unalloyed knowledge, a magazine of power that made his teachings explode like bombs on the Christian world. "Do you believe what Christ says," Vivekananda once asked his Western audience:

'Sell all that thou hast and give to the poor?' Practical equality there; no trying to torture the texts, but taking the truth as it is.²

"I have heard it said," the Swami relentlessly continued:

that that was preached only to the handful of Jews who listened to Jesus. The same argument will apply to other things also. Do not torture texts; dare to face the truth as it is. Even if we cannot reach to it, let us confess our weakness, but let us not destroy the ideal. ...There it is—'Sell

all that thou hast and give to the poor and follow me.' Thus trampling on every privilege and everything in us that works for privilege, let us work for that knowledge which will bring the feeling of sameness towards all mankind.³

If *The Imitation of Christ* could inspire Swami Vivekananda with devotion and fire him with renunciation, so also it reiterated the message of his Master—to bypass the intellect and go deep within. Though Thomas à Kempis was himself recognized by the Swami as "a genius," it was à Kempis's yearning for God that marked that genius. "My son," à Kempis wrote, "let not the sayings of men move thee..."⁴

I am He that teacheth man knowledge; and I bestow on little children a clearer understanding than can be taught by man. ...I teach without noise of words, without confusion of opinions, without ambition of honour, without the scuffling of arguments.⁵

The theme of "head versus heart," so aptly expressed in *The Imitation of Christ*, was a message Swami Vivekananda also preached to his monks and to the world. He would tell his young monastic disciples:

One man contains within him the whole universe. One particle of matter has all the energy of the universe at its back. In a conflict between the heart and the brain, follow your heart.⁶

3. Loc. cit.

4. *The Imitation of Christ*, III: 43. 1.

5. Op. cit., III: 43. 2-3.

6. *The Life of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. II, pp. 419-20.

1. *The Complete Works*, Vol. VIII, p. 160.

2. *The Complete Works*, Vol. I, p. 429.

Again, in his lecture on "Practical Vedanta I," Swamiji enjoined his audience, "It is through the heart that the Lord is seen, and not through the intellect."

The intellect is only the street-cleaner, cleansing the path for us, a secondary worker, the policeman.... He is only to stop disturbances, to check wrong-doing, and that is all the work required of the intellect.... Do you feel?—that is the question. If you do, you will see the Lord. It is the feeling that you have today that will be intensified, deified, raised to the highest platform, until it feels everything, the oneness in everything, till it feels God in itself and in others....⁷

The Swami added, "Those of you who have read Thomas à Kempis know how in every page he insists on this...."⁸

Passages from *The Imitation of Christ* express a deep sense of self-surrender, heavily punctuated with spiritual insight. Intense desire for God, coupled with self-introspection was another work of Thomas à Kempis's genius. "Through levity of heart," à Kempis wrote:

and small care for our failings, we become insensible of the real sorrows of our souls ; and so oftentimes we vainly laugh, when we have just cause to weep.⁹

The Imitation of Christ presents Thomas à Kempis as a master psychologist, borne of deep meditation:

A man is hindered and distracted, in proportion as he draweth external matters unto himself. (II:1.7.) The more a man is united within himself, and becometh inwardly simple and pure, so much the more and higher things doth he understand

without labour ; for that he receiveth intellectual light from above.¹⁰

Like à Kempis, Swamiji's teachings revealed his keen powers of introspection. "Self-restraint is a manifestation of greater power than all outgoing action," Swamiji explained in a lecture that parallels the above-passage:

All outgoing energy following a selfish motive is frittered away ; it will not cause power to return to you ; but if restrained, it will result in development of power. This self-control will tend to produce a mighty will, a character which tends to make a Christ or a Buddha.¹¹

Many times, in simple, aphoristic language like à Kempis, Swamiji could bring religion home to even a child by explaining reasons behind rituals, meanings within myths, and revelations effecting philosophies.

Despite Swamiji's devotion to Thomas à Kempis, he accepted only those writings verified by his own knowledge of God. Once an Indian visitor, having heard of the Swami's deep regard for *The Imitation of Christ*, felt assured in stating that "spiritual progress was impossible unless one thought of oneself as the lowest of the low." Swamiji in his characteristic way, responded:

Why should we think ourselves low, and reproach ourselves ? Where is darkness for us ! We are verily the sons of Light ! We live and move and have our being in the Light which lighteth the whole universe !¹²

Though Swamiji was the first to critique what he considered a false humility, he praised the spirit of humility that he saw in *The Imitation of Christ*. À Kempis wrote:

10. Ibid, II: 1. 7. ; I: 2. 3.

11. *The Complete Works*, Vol. I, p. 33.

12. *The Life of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. II, p. 231.

7. *The Complete Works*, Vol. II, p. 306.

8. Ibid, p. 307.

9. *The Imitation of Christ*, I: 21. 2.

He is truly great, that is little in himself, and that maketh no account of any height of honour.¹³

Indeed, it was this kind of humility that Swamiji unconsciously exemplified. Once the Swami was holding forth at the palace of Raja Dhyan Singh, before a gathering of two hundred residents of Lahore. He was praising someone at length, when a member of the gathering objected: "But Swamiji, that gentleman has no respect for you!" The Swami at once replied, "Is it necessary to respect me in order to become a good man?" The man was immediately silenced.¹⁴

Swamiji's humility was paramount. Many distinguished guests used to come to Belur Math. Among them was the Buddhist missionary Anagarika Dharmapala, who first stopped at the monastery to request Swamiji to accompany him to the old cottage on the recently-purchased Math grounds, where Mrs. Ole Bull was staying. "It was raining in torrents," we read in *The Life of Swami Vivekananda*:

After waiting for an hour the Swami and Dharmapala, with a few others, decided to start. Their way lay across very uneven and muddy ground, particularly in the compound of the new Math, which was being levelled. Drenched with rain, his feet slipping in the mud, the Swami enjoyed himself like a boy, shouting with laughter and merriment. Dharmapala was the only one who was not bare-footed. At one place his foot sank so deep in the mud that he could not extricate himself. The Swami, seeing his plight, lent his shoulder for support and, putting his arm round the visitor's waist, helped him out. Both laughing, walked linked together the rest of the way.

On reaching the cottage, all went to wash their feet. When the Swami saw Dharmapala take a pitcher of water for that purpose, he seized it from him, saying, "You are my guest, and I must have the privilege of serving you!"....All those who witnessed the scene were amazed at the Swami's humility.¹⁵

One of Swami Vivekananda's favourite passages from *The Imitation of Christ* was:

We have taken up the Cross, Thou hast laid it upon us and grant us strength that we bear it unto death.¹⁶

This passage perhaps best sums up Swamiji's own brand of humility—the strength with which he bore all trials and tribulations. In a broader sense, it also foretells the nature of his own life's mission—a divine mission that brought suffering and drew strength.

Swami Vivekananda was born on earth to accomplish great things—to establish a new Order of monasticism, awaken the consciousness of his sleeping motherland, revitalize and broaden Hinduism, and to spread the message of Vedanta to the world—which he did tirelessly through lectures, classes, writings, interviews, and a prolific correspondence.

As the foremost disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda was both the leader of his master's modern monasticism, as well as Sri Ramakrishna's messenger to the world. Swami Brahmananda once described the sacrificing nature of his beloved brother-disciple. "Ah!" Maharaj remarked to a young monk:

Swamiji gave his heart's blood to build this monastery so that you young men might have the opportunity to devote your

13. *The Imitation of Christ*, I: 3. 6.

14. *The Life of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. II, 288.

15. *Ibid*, p. 322.

16. *The Complete Works*, Vol. VI, p. 207.

lives to God and practice spiritual disciplines. In fact, in his effort to make your life easier he over-exerted himself and shortened his own life. What intense love he had toward all mankind!

Swami Brahmananda continued:

Sri Ramakrishna was revealed to the world at large through Swamiji. Know that their words and teachings are not different.¹⁷

Fame was another Cross the Swami patiently bore. In a letter written to Mrs. George Hale, on August 23, 1894, he confessed:

In India I have become horribly public—crowds will follow me and take my life out....Every ounce of fame can only be bought at the cost of a pound of peace and holiness. ...Why Mother, I confess to you: no man can live in an atmosphere of public life, even in religion, without the devil of competition now and then thrusting his head into the serenity of his heart. Those who are trained to preach a *doctrine* never feel it, for they never knew *religion*.¹⁸

This was the Cross of Vivekananda, the World Teacher, who was once the young, wandering sannyasin with only the Gita and *The Imitation of Christ* as his possessions. Swamiji's longing for a return to those days, was expressed in the next paragraph of the same letter, "I have such a beautiful edition of Thomas à Kempis," he wrote.

How I love that old monk. He caught a wonderful glimpse of "behind the veil"—few ever got such. My, that is religion. No humbug of the world. No shilly-shallying, tall talk, conjecture—I presume,

I believe, I think. How I would like to go out of this piece of painted humbug they call the beautiful world with Thomas à Kempis—beyond, beyond, which can only be felt, never expressed.¹⁹

But Swami Vivekananda was not to leave this world until he bore his Cross to its final destination. This sacrifice reveals the grandeur of his compassion along with his breathtaking compassion for mankind.

Swamiji risked broken health to endure a crushing schedule—"cyclonic" lecture tours, demanding correspondence, pressures of administrative work in East and West, and the irregularity of food and sleep this life-style imposed. The Swami endured American racial discrimination and slanderous Christian missionaries. He came home to homage and ovations to find himself outcaste by orthodoxy—the target of jealous Hindus and American Mission vilifiers. Only a World Teacher who knew that he was born to give his message to the world could bear such a Cross, when silently he lived in the "memories of long nights with Sri Ramakrishna under the Dakshineswar Banyan."²⁰ "And I have been told," the Swami further promised in a letter to Sister Christine,

by one, who has been the personal God to me, that I am to come once more yet.²¹

Perhaps the greatest test of Swami Vivekananda's humility and strength was his acceptance of those who betrayed him. It is this aspect of the Swami's life that touches so dramatically near to Christ's. In Swamiji's correspondence, we cannot help but feel the impact of this *lilā* of the Cross.

The first defector was Leon Landsburg, Swami Kripananda, on whom Swamiji had

17. Prabhavananda, Swami *The Eternal Companion* (Hollywood: Vedanta Press, 1970), p. 182.

18. *Prabuddha Bharata*, 1980 (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1980), pp. 69-70.

19. Loc cit.

20. 12 April 1900, VSSC archives.

21. *Prabuddha Bharata*, 1977 (Letter of 29 August 1898), p. 397.

bestowed sannyas at Thousand Island Park. Landsburg's paranoia first soured their relationship. Later, it was severed by the tormented Landsburg's published diatribe—all in the name of Vedanta—against Americans in general, Theosophists, and spiritualists in particular—a grave transgression that could only be corrected by the Swami's outward indifference towards his beloved disciple. In early August 1896, after a long and heated correspondence with Mrs. Ole Bull, whom he considered his only remaining friend, Landsburg lost not only her respect, but her friendship. It was at this time, when Swamiji was in Switzerland, that he heard, as it were, his disciple's cry of anguish and immediately sent him his blessings by mail. In a letter to J. J. Goodwin, written on August 8, 1896, Swamiji divulged the lofty plane from which he observed Landsburg—a state that fashioned his forgiving heart, unfettered by the world's petty quarrels. "It is in the nature of things that many should fall," Swamiji wrote:

that troubles should come, that tremendous difficulties should arise, that selfishness and all other devils in the human heart should struggle hard when they are about to be driven out by the fire of spirituality. The road to God is the roughest and steepest in the universe. It is a wonder that so many succeed, no wonder that so many fall. Character has to be established through a thousand stumbles.²²

Two years later Miss Henrietta Muller, one of the Swami's "gifts of England to India" defected by making a formal newspaper declaration on December 25, 1898, in the *Indian Social Reformer*. "To our Christian brethren," the *Reformer* gloated:

we beg to offer a Christmas present in the shape of the news, which we have just received from the most authentic source,

that Miss Muller has completely severed her connection with Swami Vivekananda's movement to spread Hinduism, and that she has returned to her Christian faith....²³

Again, Swamiji's Christlike forgiveness was evident in a 20 June 1900 letter to Sister Christine, he confided:

Did you hear of my friend Miss Muller? Well, she left me in India, and, they say, tried to injure me in England. This morning I got a letter from her that she is coming to the States, and wants to see me badly! Her defection was a great blow to me, as I loved her so much, and she was a great helper and worker....She wants to come by the end of June. I, of course, want her to come earlier.²⁴

Two years later, less than three weeks before his own passing, Swamiji reported the defection of his sannyasin disciple Marie Louise. In a 14 June 1902 letter to Mrs. Ole Bull:

I wanted to write many things, but the flesh is weak. Marie Louise has become a devotee of Sri Caitanya and I hear that several wealthy men have taken her up. ...She had a desire for money, so may the Lord give her much money.²⁵

What is the relevance of a Landsburg, a Muller or a Marie Louise to us? What is it that makes their betrayals touch our hearts nearly a hundred years later? In Vivekananda's divine play, all those who met and served him enacted not only their own human roles, but a more universal drama for future generations to observe and profit by.

In a sense, Swamiji's greatest friends and disciples are our higher ideals and aspirations. But just as we share in their glory,

23. *The Life of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. II, p. 414.

24. *Prabuddha Bharata* (1978), p. 71.

25. *The Complete Works* (Bengali Edition), Vol. V, p. 180.

22. *The Complete Works*, Vol. VIII, p. 383.

so also Swamiji's wayward disciples were no less instructive. Their personalities—even today—are uncanny reminders of our own tendencies to darkness, delusion, and doubt. Landsburg, Muller, Marie Louise and others, by living out their own *karmas*, have, in a sense, liberated us from their errors. They are our tragic examples.

As these disciples enacted their roles of betrayal and slander against Vivekananda, we can then unearth the Swami's response and our own example to live by.

Perhaps the most heartrending defection was that of Mr. E. T. Sturdy. In the fall of 1899, we read in *The Life of Swami Vivekananda*:

The emotional shock of an unexpected encounter with Swami Kripananda, who earlier had betrayed him, together with a bitter letter of recrimination and dissension he had received around this time from Mr. Sturdy, could not have left [Swamiji's] highly sensitive body unaffected.²⁶

How ironic that à Kempis's chapter "Against the Tongue of Slanderers" would have been a forecast and forewarning. Undoubtedly Swami Vivekananda was to draw on this passage again and again:

He that neither coveteth to please men, nor feareth to displease them, shall enjoy much peace.

If thou dost walk inwardly, thou wilt not much weigh fleeting words outwardly.²⁷

It seems that these passages of à Kempis were guiding his pen, when Swamiji responded to his beloved disciple Sturdy on September 14, 1899. "I am sorry we could not come up to your ideal," he wrote.

But my experience of life is we so rarely find a person who comes up to that. Then

26. *The Life of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. II, p. 490.

27. *The Imitation of Christ*, III: 28. 2.

again it is almost impossible for anyone to keep steady on the plane we assign to him in the ideal. We are so human, and liable to change for good or worse. At the same time, like the earth's rotating, we are always leaving the changes in us out of [our] calculation, and attribute it all to external ideals.

Swami Vivekananda inadvertently revealed the irony of his betrayal. For was it not his Christ-like compassion that had contributed to his ill health that disillusioned his defectors? He continued his letter:

Mrs. Jonson [another English Vedanta member] is of the opinion that no spiritual person ought to be ill. It also seems to her that my smoking is sinful & c., & c. That was Miss Muller's reason for leaving me, my illness. They may be perfectly right, for aught I know, and you too, but I am what I am. In India, the same defects, plus eating with Europeans, have been taken exception to by many. I was driven out of a private temple by the owners for eating with Europeans. I wish I were malleable enough to be moulded into whatever one desired, but unfortunately I never saw a man who could satisfy everyone. Nor can anyone who has to go to different places possibly satisfy all.

Swamiji continued:

When I first came to America, they ill-treated me if I had not trousers on. Next I was forced to wear cuffs and collars, else they would not touch me... They thought me awfully funny if I did not eat what they offered.... I can understand well how differences of opinion, tastes and ideals should naturally arise in the course of years, but how so much hatred and dislike may slowly, and without any warning expression, gather round little, trifling personal peculiarities, I cannot understand. No matter what the occasion, Swamiji

never failed to enlighten the ignorant. Sturdy's disillusionment was no exception:

I so long thought [Swamiji wrote] it was only the fault of enslaved races like mine, but that manlier races like yours should also have it, and suddenly bring it to light without any previous warning, makes me sad.

He continued:

Of course, it is my Karma, and I am glad that it is so. For, though it smarts for the time, it is another great experience of life, which will be useful, either in this or in the next.

If you....repent of the help you gave to my work, only give me time—I will try my best to pay it back. As for me, I am always in the midst of ebbs and flows. I knew it always and preached always that every bit of pleasure will bring its quota of pain, if not with compound interest. I have a good deal of love given to me by the world; I deserve a good deal of hatred therefore....

Swamiji's forgiveness was to become one of his most eloquent messages to the Christian world, empowered by a loving kindness that untied all the knots and twists of

Sturdy's doubting heart and led him to the admission years later: "I made a terrible mistake."²⁸ But Vivekananda was never to hear this, for he had long since left this world.

Fortunately, however, Sturdy saved his guru's private letter, which has since become a treasure for all to share. It is part of Swamiji's spiritual legacy as a World Teacher, and bears the unmistakable stamp of another time, another country, and another World Teacher's unfathomable forgiveness. "As for me," Swami Vivekananda wrote:

I stick to my nature and principle—once a friend, always a friend—also the true Indian principle of looking subjectively for the cause of the objective.

I am sure that the fault is mine, and mine only, for every wave of dislike and hatred that I get. It could not be otherwise. Thinking of you...for this calling once more to the internal,

I remain as ever with love and blessings,

Vivekananda.

28. Unpublished conversations of Swami Prabhavananda, Vedanta Society of Southern California, Santa Barbara.

The purer the mind, the easier it is to control...Perfect morality is the all-in-all of complete control over the mind. The man who is perfectly moral has nothing more to do, he is free.

—Swami Vivekananda

Literature and Values

DR. N. R. SHASTRI

Literature has value, not only in terms of its expressing beauty and truth, but also in terms of the good and the blissful. The author of this insightful article is Reader in the Department of English at Osmania University, Hyderabad.

A value system is generally a set of values related to a specific aspect of society. They may be monetary, religious, moral, ethical, cultural, aesthetic and the like. There are two sets of values to which humanistic studies are applied in the educational institutions: aesthetic values, and moral and ethical values.

Aesthetic values are concerned with the quality of works of art, musical compositions, writing, cinema and of performances within the arts. Moral and ethical values as extracted from works of art might be called 'applied humanities'. Such works as painting, sculpture, music, dances, plays, novels, poems and films are studied for what they reveal of the human enterprise, attitudes about love, pleasure, war and peace, right and wrong and so forth.

Throughout history, artists, novelists, composers, dramatists, poets and film-makers have used their art forms to express moral conflict. The arts have been a seedbed for painting and growing human values in successive generations of human beings. They also provide seedlings of change in social and cultural values, and reflect the disintegration of values too.

In his mural, *Guernica*, Pablo Picasso depicted the horrors of war following the first saturation bombing of the entire town of Guernica, Spain, by German planes under the General Francisco Franco on April 26, 1937. The effect of war on human beings

has been a popular theme in literature from Euripedes' *The Trojan Woman*, through Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace* to Stephen Crane's *Red Badge of Courage* and Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind*.

Contemporary American values are depicted in art through the giant Campbell's soup cans and Brillo boxes of Andy Warhol, the comic strip paintings of Roy Liechtenstein, and the various Pop art and anti-art movements. The visual arts reflect the values of a society and culture through its activities and images. They also reflect the breakdown of value systems through what Erich Kahler calls "the disintegration of form".

Conflicts between individuals with opposing value orientations provide the basis of much of our literature. They are fought in the living room of Edith Wharton, in the New England settings of Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Eugene O'Neill and the various European hillsides and towns of Hemingway. The constancy of conflict between two generations within the same family are exemplified in William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* and John Steinbeck's *East of Eden*.

How do these value conflicts arise? The ancient Greeks believed that there are three eternal or universal truths, or what they called 'eternal verities': truth, beauty and goodness. The conflicts arise because of the diverse nature of human needs, which are not the same as human values. They are

nonetheless intricately interrelated. Milton Rokeach in *The Nature of Human Values* suggests that values are the representations of human (individual), societal and institutional needs. They result from both sociological and psychological forces acting upon the individual.

It is sometimes argued that value education programmes can be integrated with the existing subjects like social studies, literature, history, philosophy etc. For students of literature in particular, great literature raises certain fundamental social and moral problems like the inner conflict of Hamlet, Macbeth, Raskolnikov or the social injustices raised by Dickens, Balzac and Gaskell. Teachers concerned with great literature cannot avoid discussing the motives, intentions and conflicts of characters with their students and thereby raising issues of controversial and ethical nature.

It is in this context one has to carefully examine the role of study of literature vis-a-vis value instruction. To regard the study of literature merely as a means of raising moral, ethical questions would surely be to debase both literature and morality. Fiction, drama and poetry are real for their intrinsic value as literary works, for their richness and language, their structure and perhaps the reflection of the author's personality or social consciousness. Literature surely should not be used purely instrumentally as a means to some other end. Similarly, if values are to be taught as part of a student's education, then some deliberate attention must be paid to the nature of values with their own peculiar concepts, methodology and evaluation criteria.

Moreover, the issue between literature and morality has been debated from time to time with sufficient zeal. One extreme view is that literature is primarily a moral or propagandist force. A work of literature ought to embody as numerous collection

of moral ideas as it possibly can. A modern variation of this view in literature is but a rendering of the class struggle and has value only if it is vigorously proletarian. As the Soviet writer, Kusinov points out, "The idea of a work is false if it is false from the standpoint of consciousness of the given class; it is true if it corresponds to that class' veritable consciousness: it is not false if the author is deeply convinced of its truth." At the other extreme, there are critics who argue that literature should have no overt or covert propagandist purpose, secular, political or religious. Art is for Art's sake alone, and beauty should be the sole criterion for judging art of literature. Therefore, morality and literature, according to them, should not be linked together.

At the same time, it is argued by some that morality and literature are not to be divorced in the way in which some of the aesthetes sought to divorce them. A work of literature need not be moral in the sense in which a pulpit sermon or tale is moral. Morality grows out of the work of art itself, rather than its being superimposed. Literature is criticism of life, in the sense that moral conflicts are presented in terms of reality 'freed from the seeming idiosyncracies of chance'. For example, we know that Macbeth is a murderer and remains so till the end. We also know the moral of his crime: Wages of sin is death. But Macbeth the murderer is also a human being and the tragedy is that a man cast in so heroic a mould should nevertheless commit so sordid a crime as the murder of his defenceless guest and kinsman and king, and thereby destroy himself completely. Shakespeare does not admire Macbeth as a Magistrate does, but presents the case with its hallowed intensity and fervour, with sympathy and sincerity for misguided human beings.

It is in this light that one has to consider the import of mimetic theories. The 'imita-

tion' as Aristotle conceived it, was representation of life. It was selective and purposive and great poetry was somehow more real than life, presenting to the reader a higher realism—a realism charged with significance. Tragic poets like Aeschylus and Sophocles portrayed the passions of pity and terror in order to effect a purification, a purgation, a kind of transcendence of emotions or what may be called in technical terms, catharsis. Poetry was thus essentially a moral force and great works of literature presented these versions of reality in aesthetic form and linguistic structure.

We may consider in this context, Shakespeare's *Hamlet* which appeals to our aesthetic sense. It acquires aesthetic value in its treatment of the theme. The play is a study of an individual's character at a critical point of his life, a study of the spiritual crisis in Hamlet's life. It is a crisis that brings out the best and worst in him and makes him the most fascinating character created by a great artist. The play also poses certain problems of conduct, though they are not satisfactorily answered. The basic human ties are seen to go awry and are rent asunder. A brother murders his elder brother, a wife is guilty of adultery and incest, a lover insults the name and image of his love, friends dwindle into spies, a father thinks the worst of his son and daughter, a son submits his mother to the rigors of an inquisition. The play thus offers the reader certain situations that inevitably awaken the moral being in him, compelling him to observe closely this clash of mighty opposites of evil and good. The play is not only true to our sense of reality and has beauty of form and organization, but is also a power that awakens our moral sense profoundly.

Viewed from the aesthetic perspective, the value of a good poem is that its language extends, shapes and illumines our experience. The cynicism of the Duke in 'My Last

Duchess' or the visionary rapture of Dylan Thomas, become part of our own experience, because of the artistry of their language. T. S. Eliot and his 'Four Quartets' compares a God to a river:

I do not know much about gods ; but I
think that the river
Is a strong brown god—sullen, untamed
and intractable.

The larger context of the poem deals with the speaker's sense of the presence of divine power in the world. The poet makes his sense of that abstract power concrete by saying that he thinks of that power as a river—'sullen, untamed and intractable'. The poet's attitudes are caught so precisely and vividly that we are convinced of their reality and they become part of our experience and knowledge.

Moreover, any evaluation of the importance and truth of poetry depends, by and large, on evaluating the experience we have with its language. For instance, we may consider for comparison two lines from Shakespeare's plays. Hamlet's observation when he considers himself surrounded by enemies, that "one may smile and smile and yet be a villain" has a particular kind of ambiguity. To Hamlet the observation applies to practically everybody ; to us it applies, according to our experience, to fewer people. But to all readers the observation seems immediately to be true. It is, however, something we already know and is of no particular interest for the knowledge it imparts. We value it for the pacing and conciseness of language. In the larger context of the drama, it tells us much about Hamlet's emotional state and idealism as it does about his ability to perceive the truth. As part of *Hamlet*, it has its place in the grand design of a great tragedy. By itself, however, it lacks the greatness of the following quotation from *King Lear*:

When we are born, we cry that we are come
To this great stage of fools—

Lear's observation is more complex than Hamlet's. It is more densely metaphysical, more surprising, even audacious, and more comprehensive. It refers to more of man's experience; its frame of reference is larger, grander and more spiritual. Even though its tone is elevated, its central image is drawn from common experience. It achieves a different order of truth than Hamlet's line achieves, and as a result more people could call it 'great'.

While we immediately recognize the truth of Hamlet's line, we are not so quick to accept Lear's metaphor. It may be that babies taken from the womb cry from pain of the cold air and the difficulties of learning to breathe, and it may be, as Freud suggests, that the baby taken from the womb senses a loss of security. But it is not literally true that babies cry *because* this is a great stage of fools. Lear speaks not just in metaphor but in madness, and our reflex is to keep a safe distance from such intensity of emotion. But the beauty of the line is amazing and haunting because its intensity is an essential part of its greatness. Its truth, being locked safely in metaphor, is not something we care to analyse as we could a rhetorical statement. It pushes beyond the boundaries of our conscious experience into the disorderly area of our unconscious fears, and there the language shapes an insight. We validate its truth from experience that we are not conscious of having had. The greatness of the line is in its magnitude, in its intensity and power, but chiefly in the ease with which our imagination is engaged to give comprehensive form to the anxieties and despairing moments of all men.

The truth of great poetry may be a personal and relative truth. But great poetry has other qualities as illustrated in Lear's line. In the magnitude and intensity of Lear's line

we witness a great poetic imagination, create an artistic shape of enduring value, and see intense universal experience shaped into comprehensive form.

Therefore, it is unwise to treat aesthetic and moral values as totally independent of one another. On the contrary, they are inextricably interrelated and reveal the personality of the artist. As Charles Morgan aptly puts it,

Man cannot begin to think less of art without at the same time, beginning to think, more or less, of religion, of love, of equality of possessions, of power, of all else by which his mind and spirit are engaged.

In the words of Sri Aurobindo,

Art is not only technique or form of beauty, not only the discovery or the expression of beauty—it is a self-expression of Consciousness under the condition of aesthetic vision and a perfect execution. Or, to put it otherwise, there are not only aesthetic values, but life values, social values that enter into art...And there are also gradations of consciousness which make a difference, if not in the aesthetic value, or greatness of a work of art, yet in its content-value. Homer makes beauty out of men's outward life and action, and stops there. Shakespeare rises one step and reveals to us a life-soul and life-forces and life-values to which Homer had no access. In Valmiki and Vyasa there is the constant presence of great Idea-Forces and Ideals supporting life and its movements which were beyond the scope of Homer and Shakespeare....If we take these three elements as making the whole of Art, perfection and expressive form, discovery of beauty, revelation of the soul and essence of things and the powers of creative consciousness and Ananda of which they are the vehicles, then we shall get perhaps a solution which includes the two sides of the controversy and reconciles their difference. Art for Art's sake certainly: Art as a perfect form and discovery of beauty; but also Art for soul's sake, the spirit's sake, and the expression of all that the soul, the spirit wants to seize through the medium of beauty.

In conclusion, we may say that a work of art is not only beautiful and true but also a vehicle of moral form of powerful import.

Vivekananda's Way to Russia *

DR. ROSSOV VLADIMIR ANDREEVICH

I am very glad to deliver this speech in the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, in the Vivekananda Hall.

I propose to tell you about the influence of Indian philosophy and culture, specially Vedanta Philosophy, on Russian scientists and Russian thought. This subject is little known to the Indian people. What can we do? We all are growing under the rays of Indian wisdom as all living beings are warmed by the sun. But now I have not much time to touch upon this deep subject of Swami Vivekananda's influence. I keep this thought for my future speeches and my future book, *East Recalled*. Now I would like to tell you the history of Swami Vivekananda's way to Russia.

At the end of the nineteenth, and at the beginning of the twentieth century, while Swami Vivekananda was preaching in America and in India, as you know, at the same time another brilliant man—a military man—was living in Russia. His name was K. J. Popov. He was very educated and well-known in the world of intelligent people. He had a beautiful wife, who was a chemist by profession. She perished during her experimental laboratory work. Her husband, Mr. Popov, was shocked by grief. He tried to contact his wife's soul. He wanted to meet her in the higher world. He travelled and tried to find the people who could help him hear his wife's voice from the other world.

Mr. Popov travelled around Europe and visited many theosophical and spiritual centres. But he could not meet anywhere anybody who could help him in his difficult situation. At last he reached Italy where he was told to visit India and Indian Yogis. He took a ticket, boarded a ship and started towards India. Mr. Popov arrived at Bombay port. At the same time Swami Vivekananda had returned from America. Their ways crossed. Mr. Popov talked to Swamiji and asked about his wife. How Swami Vivekananda replied we do not know. After this meeting, however, Mr. Popov was calm, and he was no more eager to meet his wife. Thus, this meeting gave him some inspiration. He didn't try further to reach the opposite bank of the river, the bank of death. And he dedicated his life for the service of mankind, which from then on he considered as service to God. Mr. Popov came back to Russia. He resumed his life at his native place, near Kiev, and began to translate the books of Swami Vivekananda.

After sometime, in 1906, the first book of Swami Vivekananda was published in the Russian language. One after another appeared other books, like *Philosophy of Vedanta*, *Karma Yoga*, *Raja Yoga*, *Bhakti Yoga*, and *Jnana Yoga*. After ten more years, in 1916, in the same place another army man—a doctor—came back from the war-field to his parents' village, also near Kiev. His name was B. L. Smirnov. Afterwards, he became a famous Academician, who translated into

* Short speech delivered at Ramakrishna Mission Institute of culture, Calcutta on 16 March, 1991.

(Continued on page 351)

Nation Pays Its Homage

By conferring upon the late Rajiv Gandhi (Aug. 20, 1944—May 21, 1991) posthumously on 6th July 1991 the highest civil award '*Bharata Ratna*', the Nation acknowledged with heavy heart the selfless service rendered by its dutiful, noble son. The fiendish assassination on 21st May of the young, enthusiastic and visionary former Prime Minister has stunned India as well as the world. The country is still in the grip of shock-waves, and writhing under the gloom of sorrow. A promising life was cut short in its prime of youth, falling victim to a threatening climate of violence that has steadily overtaken the subcontinent. With one blow the uncertainty loomed large over the destiny of 844 million people and their hopes shattered to smithereens. The country placed its faith in that youthful leader, invested its weight on those strong shoulders. Alas! In an overnight that robust body was blown to pieces and had to rest on the shoulders of pall bearers!

A few years ago, in 1984, his Mother, Indira Gandhi, too, was felled by senseless extremists. India reeled under grief, not knowing where to turn for solace and succour. As a reluctant politician Rajiv took up the mantle and tried to dispell the gloom of despair and despondency, stem the extremism, satisfy genuine and imaginary discontent brewing in the hearts of some sections of society. Many peace accords were signed during his period of leadership; many sincere efforts were made by him to bring about global peace. The same person who strived, trotted over the globe for peace, became victim of the violence, ironically.

For the last decade or so India has been undergoing a painful period of turmoil. Violence in its various ugly manifestations—brutal killings, bomb blasts, kidnappings, would no more strike us with surprise. The newspapers and the electronic media are full of such ghastly events. Killings have become an everyday affair, like theft and looting. None seems to take these things seriously. This savagery has not remained an exclusive prerogative of extremists, but the virus has spread deeper in our society. The recently concluded general elections were attended by an unprecedented wave of killings, rigging, booth-capturing, and intimidation. These disturbing and dangerous trends threaten to eclipse all the healthy norms of democracy in the nation. Frequent orgies of communal rioting, notorious criminals fighting against free elections and coercing the voters, political parties employing or even patronizing thugs with criminal records, impotency of state and central administration to curb mounting black money and widespread corruption have crumpled the fabric of national conscience. Thoughtful Indians have, not unnaturally, become disgruntled with the state of affairs.

Of late, there is too much politics and less sincere administering in the country. Society has been vitiated by dirty politics. Throwing to the winds decent respect for truth and honesty, many weakhearted opportunists are entering politics for the purpose of enjoying power and making quick money and are not above stooping to unscrupulous actions. It would be a prudent step that our people

should be educated and warned to beware how their trust is being betrayed.

India has to blame herself for this impasse. For ages, this sacred and peace-loving land of Buddha, Mahavira, Chaitanya, Guru Nanak, Sri Ramakrishna, Vivekananda, and Mahatma Gandhi has given us example and precepts. The world has always looked with hope towards India for guidance. Today, we have become reduced in the eyes of the world. We must try to recover our feet and vision with vigour and self-confidence.

India is essentially spiritual. Without

spirituality we are lost. The time has come for us now to purge ourselves of all impurities and violence. It is our prime duty now to purify our individual and national heart and mind. We must listen with renewed faith to the teaching of *Vedānta*, our national heritage, to the oneness of God and Man, which has all the while been teaching us to live for *Bahujana hitāya ; bahujana sukhāya* —for the good of many, and the welfare of many. Unless we do it, we leave to our posterity a bleak future and a nation vulnerable to further degradation.

VIVEKANANDA'S WAY TO RUSSIA

(Continued from page 349)

Russian the epic *Mahabharata*. The young doctor came there to meet Mr. Popov, who gave him his translations of the works of Vivekananda to read. From this time Smirnov started his lessons in Sanskrit language. His daily routine was to wake up early in the morning to help his parents plough the land. But before that he spent twenty minutes everyday before sunrise studying and learning Sanskrit. He soon translated *Nala and Damayanti* in Russian. After a decade *The Bhagavad Gita* and the volumes of *The Mahabharata* appeared. In all there were more than ten volumes of translated works, literary and artistic. This is just a glimpse of history which I gathered

from the letters of Academician Smirnov.

I want to draw your attention again towards the personality of Mr. Popov. We do not know his fate, he disappeared in 1919. Nothing of his archives or his notes have survived. But his translations of the works of Swami Vivekananda are still there. These books influenced deeply the cultural heritage of Russian literature and science, through L. N. Tolstoy, N. K. Roerich, V. I. Vernadsky, and others. It was a result of a direct powerful impulse of the mission and vision of Swami Vivekananda. This is now transferred to us generation after generation. And these ideals are living today within us, in our hearts.

Unpublished Letters

*From Josephine MacLeod to Miss Mead
(Sister Lalita)*

c/o 269 Madison Avenue
New York
September 7, 1902

Hatfield House,
Massena Springs,
St. Lawrence Co.,
New York

My dear Miss Mead,

I have waited to write you and your sisters till I could tell you the details and life of the last few weeks and hours of Swamiji. Now, I know indeed that the cablegram from Nivedita reading: "Grieve not, all victory and benediction" that she sent me is true. His death was indeed a triumph and all India has thrilled to it.

Having his health reestablished for many weeks, strong and vigorous and meditating daily, with all his disciples and brother monks after a plunge in the Ganges at 4 a.m. by 4:30 they were all in the worship room in meditation daily. The last ten days especially did he meditate much, saying a great "tapasya" was upon him, and he must prepare for death. Nivedita who returned from the Himalayas the Friday before his death said he came to her little house—17 Bose Para Lane, Baghbazaar, Calcutta on "Saturday morning (June 28) at 9—went over the whole house, explaining everything, examined everything, sat down on his own rug here, played with some Lucknow figures I had brought, expressed delight with the microscope and magic lanterns and camera and told me to bring him the microscope next day, asked me about what I planned—I said

'University Settlement work rather than a school,' he said, 'right.' As he went I said, 'Swami, you must come back and bless the work,' and he said, 'I am always blessing you.'"

Sunday morning, June 29, "I went early to the Math, 8 or 8:30 and stayed till 5. ...That day, I think I must have told you. He said a great Tapasya was coming over him. Had I not been there at near noon he would still have been in the chapel. He felt that death was drawing near, but I never dreamt of less than 3 or 4 years.

On Wednesday the 2nd of July when Nivedita went to the Math he fanned her during her meal and washed her hands afterwards and when she remonstrated, he said, "Jesus washed the feet of *his* disciples!" He blessed her ever so sweetly as she left. Taking her head in his hands.

On July 4th, the day he died, besides meditating 3 hours in the morning, teaching the Vedas and Sanskrit grammar during several hours in the afternoon. "He walked two miles with one of the monks, talking all the time about the rise and fall of nations from Babylon and Egypt downwards. On his return he spoke again of how well he had been feeling all through the day, and free, and after evening meditation, he lay down in his own room with one of the young disciples to fan him and after an hour the brahmacharin, thinking him to be sleeping, saw his hands tremble a little and he gave out a deep breath and he did not breathe at all for a minute or so. Then another deep breath and his head rolled off the pillow and all was still. The man thought this unusual and called for help. All came to find Swami lying flat on his back. His eyes fixed on the centre of his eyebrows. His face all radiant with a divine

calm, the beauty of which can never be fathomed, nor the like of which has one ever seen before. Everyone could well see he was in samadhi and thought he would rise again. They tried all the means, but he never spoke again.

The body was cremated the day after, in the afternoon, on our own grounds. The samadhi happened at 9:10 in the evening of July 4th.

I have told you all about how the words of Sri Ramakrishna have been fulfilled—that the moment he would know himself he would free himself of his mortal coil!

Swami Turiyananda has arrived—two days ago—you can imagine his disappointment. Yes, the *raison d'être* of life is gone, except for the keeping up of his work. But where is the power to come to us to do so? Perhaps he will send and guide and protect!

With blessings and prayers that you might be given the light and the strength in this crisis. Yours sincerely, Saradananda."

I have thought it wiser to quote the very words of Swami Saradananda. It is Saradananda that Ramakrishna always coupled with Swamiji. Swamiji being the cup, Saradananda the saucer, the cup and saucer.

Swamiji loved you—you three sisters—with such tenderness. "You were the women of which America could be proud—the silent courageous worker—fearless and self-reliant—and so pure", and "the married one nursed me with such kindness. You will never guess." And then your way of leaguering together to give him a dollar a month of your hard earned money. It was that prac-

tical intelligent use of life that he saw epitomized in you all! He said to me once, "I can never love the rich and happy but it is the hard working American girl that I love—that my heart yearns to help. The rich, no, they are not for me", and I always knew he thought of you in those moments.

Dear Miss Mead—while he lived you served him and now he is dead. My heart turns to you with an inexpressible tenderness. I do not know which way my life will turn. I believe one can only do well what one *loves* to do. So I will wait till this first anguish is over before I try to make a future. When you are free—if you ever are— I would willingly help you to go to India if you care to give yourself to his country. There are only two or three people whom I would ever help to go there. Their burdens are so heavy. I would not add to them by sending anyone to them who would ever criticize *anything* they do. Poverty with us is *riches* to them—one meal a day—comfort—but if one could love them with the love that brings hope and faith and strength then I should say go and I will help to send you there.

Will you kindly let me know what you have of Swamiji's lectures in California and can you have them typewritten and send them to me? I will pay for them. And would you write me an account of his stay with you—any simple thing he said or did? I am here for my health and am somewhat better. Write me at New York City and always believe in the sincerity of one who loves him.

J. MacLeod

A Review Article

DR. SATISH K. KAPOOR

VIVEKANANDA—The Prophet of Human Emancipation (A study on the social philosophy of Swami Vivekananda) By Santwana Dasgupta, 1991 ; W2A(R) 16/4, Phase IV (B) Golf Green, Calcutta-45. Pp xii plus 493, Rs. 150.

India in the nineteenth century presented a disconsolate picture of itself. It appeared like a mummy of a civilisation which once was rich in all aspects of human activity. Chains of political slavery were rivetted round the necks of Indians. Exploitative groups were rampant. Possessed of a demonomania for Western culture, the people had lost contact with their valuable heritage. The educated sections took pride in deriding Vedanta's world-view, the concepts of *ritam* and *satyam* (the right and true), and the spiritual approach to social reform. Religion and science seemed as incompatible as 'peace and progress', 'polytheism and monotheism', or 'theism and atheism'. All this posed a challenge to the human spirit, and generated a renaissance which culminated in the gospel of Swami Vivekananda. The rational outlook of Raja Ram Mohun, the militant zeal of Swami Dayananda, the esoteric approach of theosophists, the universalism of Sri Ramakrishna—these and many other traits and strands of thought were amicably blended in the 'Cyclonic Monk' who has been aptly described as the Prophet of Human Emancipation by Santwana Dasgupta.

Works of devotees are often tainted with hyperbole, mythopoeia and unsustainable statements. But the book under review does not contain any of these flaws. Santwana Dasgupta applies her ratiocinative faculty, the best possible manner, to make an objective study of Swami Vivekananda's social philosophy, and proves that it is an

anodyne for ailing humanity. Other models of social change—Marxian, Freudian, Weberian or Sorokinian—touch upon the fringes, and fail to bring about needed root-and-branch-reform. But the ideas put forth by Swami Vivekananda can transform society by improving the quality of individuals.

Although the book does not claim to be 'the last word' on the subject, it is a comprehensive study of Swami Vivekananda's social, political, economic, historical and cultural ideas. Divided neatly into eight parts, Part I provides an overview of the Indian renaissance of the nineteenth century, role of early reformers like Ram Mohun, the making of Swami Vivekananda and his interpretation of man, religion, and the evils of society, Vedantic dialectics *vis-a-vis* Hegelian and Marxian dialectics, and finally, the *raison d'être* of convergence between science and Vedanta. Parts II to V discuss lucidly Swami Vivekananda's ideas on history, world civilisations, social evolution, forms of government, nationalism, universalism, socialistic and capitalistic models, and economic issues. The remaining parts take note of the role of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda in bringing about socio-economic and cultural metamorphosis in the land of their birth and outside. In the final analysis, Swami Vivekananda does not emerge as a theoretician or an armchair socialist, but as a 'prophet of resurgence' whose gospel is meant for mankind as a whole. To quote her: "I do not think that Swamiji has given [only] a few stray

thoughts on social reform. I firmly believe that he has given us a comprehensive social philosophy of everlasting value, built on the strong foundations of Vedanta."

Santwana Dasgupta portrays Swami Vivekananda as a Synthesiser, who helped in integrating conflicting social, religious and political ideologies of his time—individualism and socialism; nationalism and internationalism; national unity and ethnocentrism; mysticism and rationalism, and so on. His concept of development based on 'self-sustenance', 'self-esteem', and 'freedom' stands in sharp contrast to some Western models which appear to be structurally perfect but whose bases are shallow. "Without self-sustenance, no development is conceivable, without self-esteem no development can be sustained, and without freedom no development is meaningful," she says. It may also be noted that Swami Vivekananda's concept of freedom has a much wider connotation than the Marxian view, which primarily lays emphasis on economic aspects. Freedom was regarded by Swamiji as the first condition of growth, and growth was not to be interpreted only in physical or economic terms. It must start from the inner being of a person and bring about total change in him.

Santwana Dasgupta rightly emphasises that Swami Vivekananda's knowledge was not based merely on religious texts, as in the case of some of his contemporary reformers. He was well versed in natural and social sciences, and impressed everyone by his vast erudition and phenomenal memory. "Museums, universities, institutions, local history, found in him an eager student," writes Sister Nivedita. Although Swamiji did not have time to concretise his social thoughts into some form of a treatise, his perceptions of a new world order have stood the test of time, based as these were on rational and scientific grounds.

The anthropocentricity in Swami Vivekananda's works, placing man above nature, society, tradition and environment, is well brought out by the author. "Man must struggle for liberation, must fight his way out...because this struggle is the nectar of his life. He has to move on and on without a moment's break." Strength, fearlessness and freedom were the three cardinal points of Swamiji's philosophy. He firmly held that man was the creator of his own destiny, and that fatalism could prove suicidal. "All strength and succour you want is within yourselves....The Infinite future is before you."

The author's explication of Swami Vivekananda's view of religion is quite impressive. To begin with, she takes up different theories about the origin of religion—the theory of nature or ancestor worship, for example, and then brings in Swamiji's observation that religion originated in the struggle to transcend the limitations of the senses. Unlike Karl Marx, who argued that religion was rooted in fear, Swamiji believed that it originated in fearlessness. Besides, religion does not consist of doctrines, dogmas or priestcraft; it lies in realisation, in being and becoming. The learned author makes a succinct appraisal of Swamiji's concept of a universal religion and discusses such related aspects as the necessity of such religion for mankind, the difference between religion and creed, affinity between religion and science, and the absurdity of materialistic approaches. In her view, Swamiji's concept of religion encompasses Śakti, joy, life, strength, virility and freedom. That broadly explains why he disapproved of original sin, salvation, of rewards in heaven or punishments in hell and such other doctrines.

What is remarkable about the book is that it juxtaposes Swami Vivekananda's ideas with those of other modern thinkers. Refer-

(Continued on page 359)

REVIEWS & NOTICES

PERSPECTIVES ON RAMAKRISHNA-VIVEKANANDA VEDANTA TRADITION—EDITORS, M. SIVARAMAKRISHNA AND SUMITA ROY. Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd ; L-10 Green Park Extension, New Delhi 110016 ; 1991. 265 pages, Rs. 200/-.

Under the aegis of the Ramakrishna Seva Samiti of Hyderabad, a two day seminar in December 1990 was organized to deliberate on key aspects of the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna, Vivekananda and Sri Sarada Devi. The present book is the fruitful result of the proceedings. The papers published here cover a vast canvass and encompass a wide gamut of themes. Thirty-four scholarly articles discuss different topics and some of them are really splendid. The book contains seven sections. For Sections I and II the subject matter of discussion is the profundity of Sri Ramakrishna, and III, IV and V cast illumination on Vivekananda's writings, works and visions. Youth and their problems are covered in Section VI. The last section is devoted to the pertinent subject of women and their crucial role in shaping a morally healthy society, and their upliftment without excessive dependence on an external agency.

Not all the papers delve deeply into their chosen topics. Some stop only at the surface—being only informative. Many of them are fairly exhaustive and enlightening, e.g.: Dr. Rama Nair's "Ramakrishna on the Nature of Language and Mystical Experience," "The Place of the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna in Religious Literature," by Swami Brahmasthananda ; Smt. Shanta Subha Rao's "The Parables of Sri Ramakrishna," Dr. Tutun Mukherjee's "The Folk Elements in Ramakrishna's Tales," "Songs in the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna," by Swami Paramarthananda, G. V. Reddy's "The Temples of Sri Ramakrishna: Their Evolution and Significance," and "Western Biographies of Ramakrishna," by Sujatha Nayak. Dr. Makaranda Paranjape's article on "Vivekananda's Letters: An Introductory Reading" is thoughtful ; and equally refreshing is the paper on "Youth at the Crossroads," by Swami Someswarananda.

Most of the participants, who spoke and presented their papers at the Seminar are

from the English Departments of Osmania and Hyderabad Universities. Naturally, the display of scholarship has taken upperhand after underplaying the importance of simplicity and lucidity. The forthrightness of the message of these great teachers of humanity, in a few papers, has been obscured by the opacity of technical interpretation. Quotations by well-known authors is good, but too much dependence on them chokes the voice and clogs the mind of a writer. However, the meticulous attention paid by the Editors, Prof. M. Sivaramakrishna and Dr. Sumita Roy in preparing the book call forth our whole-hearted praise. Thanks to their commendable efforts.

There is no gainsaying that this flawlessly printed and handsomely produced volume is a unique contribution to the growing Ramakrishna-Vivekananda literature. The book sheds fresh innovative light on a subject so sacred, so deep. The importance of which can hardly be underestimated in our time.

S.M

UNFORGETTABLE YEARS, translated and edited by A. R. NATARAJAN. Published by the Ramana Maharshi Centre for Learning, Palace Orchards, Bangalore 560-003, 1990. 167 pages ; Rs 30/-.

An absorbing book which contains reminiscences of twenty-nine devotees of Ramana Maharshi. Some of them are still living. Most of these memoirs appeared in Telugu, Tamil and English periodicals. Now they appear in a single volume, translated admirably.

The sage sitting in a remote corner of India, drew innumerable earnest souls to his radiant divine presence. Many, in the beginning, sought his divine help to alleviate their mundane sufferings. He did fulfil their desires in order to bolster their faith in the Supreme Power. Then, silently, unobtrusively, he extricated their externalized consciousness and helped them to focus it in the subjective domain. The Knower, the Experiencer, is the substratum of everything. Maharshi's path of self-enquiry is to return to the source

from which the pseudo-entity 'I' or the experiencer shoots forth.

Sri Ramana's resplendent nature and humane concern for everything living and non-living comes alive in these scintillating pages. These devotees lived with the sage for many years and watched him day and night, occasionally with a critical eye. Therefore, their words carry spiritual fragrance and convey intimate portraits. Through these reminiscences we watch the great sage dressing vegetables and cooking food for devotees, imparting in the kitchen the down-to-earth lofty truths of Vedanta, in the Ashrama fondling animals and lovingly feeding them, totally immersed in correcting proofs or masonry work, listening to the sorrows and troubles of people and soothing their hearts, making fun and spreading cheerfulness by his sparkling wit, solving abstruse philosophical problems with utmost ease, or sitting like a statue, stillness personified, for hours in the Hall, inundating the world with love and light. Whatever he touched he sanctified it; whatever he did he ennobled it.

—a book that brings a fresh, cool, welcome breeze.

S.M.

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL FOUNDATION OF THE 'FREE PROGRESS SYSTEM' AS EVOLVED IN SRI AUROBINDO INTERNATIONAL CENTRE OF EDUCATION: BY DR. CHANDRAKANT P. PATEL. Published by Sri Aurobindo Study Centre P.O. Bokhira (Porbandar), pin 360-579, Gujarat. 1986, Pp. 290. Rs 100/-.

The book under review is a Ph. D. thesis accepted by the Saurashtra University. The author, while doing research, studied deeply the fundamental principles of education which make a human being 'perfect' in body, mind and spirit—as enunciated by Sri Aurobindo's 'Integral Philosophy of Education'. Sri Aurobindo's idea of perfect education is being implemented through the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education. It is called 'Free Progress System of Education'. The author has mainly explored and described the psychological basis of this system.

Dr. Patel has studied how the 'Free Progress System' has been working in different levels from kindergarten up and in different areas, from physical to spiritual. The study includes the discussions on curriculum, techniques of learning and teaching, method of discipline, teacher's role and the response of the students towards the spirit underlying the whole project—the perfection of life. The working and activities of the educational system of Sri Aurobindo's Ashrama has been represented in detail from which we may have an idea of an experiment on a new type of 'man-making character-building education'. Having extensively dealt with the whole system, the author comes to the conclusion that "the free progress system is a grand success as far as the mental knowledge of the student is concerned".

The book, being a research thesis, may not be interesting to the general readers, but it will certainly inspire other researchers to follow the methods of educational and psychological study in similar institutions in modern India.

Dr. Satchidananda Dhar

HERACLITUS: BY SRI AUROBINDO, Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Fourth edition, 1989. Pp. 46, Rs. 10/-.

This book is a small but illumining treatise on the philosophical thought of the Greek philosopher, Heraclitus. Aurobindo initially establishes that Heraclitus' aphorisms have to be interpreted in terms of mysticism. They are reminiscent of the symbolic and intuitive style of the Vedas. Indian philosophy stressed on an eternally One and the eternally Many. Heraclitus, too, believed in 'The idea of the One, which is eternally becoming Many, and the Many which is eternally becoming One...' (page 11) The Upanishads, too, describe the Cosmos as being in a state of perpetual universal motion and becoming. *jagatyām jagat*.

By a system of logical analysis, Aurobindo establishes that Heraclitus' contention is not simply that the One is always Many, the Many always One, but in his own words: 'Out of all, the One, and out of One, All.' Aurobindo then deals with Heraclitus' theory of relativity. To Heraclitus it is Force which

eternally creates, destroys and re-creates the universe. Such a world is governed by Reason, where absolute standards of good are judged by a divine way of looking at things.

Aurobindo's incisive enquiry results in the conclusion that the weakness in Heraclitus' philosophy is its inability to look beyond the concept of universal force and universal reason. It was incapable of enriching one's practical life. Heraclitus affirmed 'that the many are bad, the few good and that one is to him equal to thousands, if he be the best.' (page 33) Indian thought, on the other hand, saw 'the universal delight active in divine love and joy,' (page 42) which can establish the ecstasy of *mokṣa*. Mere rationalism can result in divergent schools of analytic thought, but 'inspired philosophy can seize hold of the highest secret, *uttamam rahasyam*.' (page 42) Indian philosophy is closely linked with ethics, unlike Western philosophy, its purpose being to educate and enlighten man.

Heraclitus offers fresh insight into the spiritual depth and beauty of Indian philosophy. It is also an invaluable asset in the study of Western philosophical thought. Aurobindo's lucid language, and his technique of comparative analysis with appropriate analogies from Indian philosophy, captivate the reader's interest throughout the course of the book.

Dr. Rama Nair

EDUCATION, PART ONE—ESSAYS ON EDUCATION WITH COMMENTARIES: By The Mother, Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashrama, 1989. Pp. 201, Rs. 25/-.

In the Introduction, the Mother says that these essays 'are meant for people who lead an ordinary life, ...I mean people who are primarily interested in a purely physical material life, but who try to attain more perfection in their physical life than is usual in ordinary conditions.' (page 1) Accordingly, a complete education should deal with the five principal activities of the human mind—the physical, the vital, the mental, the psychic and the spiritual. 'To know oneself

and control oneself' (page 3) is the first step towards the acquisition of an integrated physical and mental education.

The mind, according to the Mother, is not an instrument of knowledge, but it must be moved by knowledge which belongs to a much higher domain than that of the human mind. In order to receive knowledge from above and manifest it, the mind has to be still and attentive, for 'it is an instrument of formation, of organisation and action, and it is in these functions that it attains its full value and real usefulness.' (pp. 5-6) The Mother defines this new education as supramental education. Such an education is a continuous process. The task of the spiritually enlightened would be to activate the consciousness of the unenlightened towards the appearance of a divine race upon the earth. The aim of true education is, therefore, that perception of Truth which consists of Love, Knowledge, Power and Beauty. This realisation '...will be instrumental to the supramental realisation upon earth.' (page 62).

These essays and commentaries exemplify the Mother's deep commitment towards the gigantic task of re-educating humanity. The commentaries are marked by lucidity and an intense spiritual vision. By postulating a new theory, the Mother has universalised and humanised the concept of education. A refreshingly new dimension has been added to it. This book is an indispensable guide to those of us who want to cultivate the art of mental discipline to spiritually progress in this increasingly materialistic world.

Dr. Rama Nair

CONVERSATIONS—1929, 1930-31: By The Mother, Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1989, pp. 181, Rs. 18/-.

These conversations deal with a variety of subjects related to the development of mental discipline and true spiritual self-realization. The Mother's analysis is based on profound spiritual insight and a deep practical wisdom. For instance, the Mother unequivocally dispenses with the traditional modes of spiritual progress through the practice of 'austerity', 'asceticism', 'renunciation', and 'self-morti-

fication'. Instead, she advocates the path of total surrender to the Divine will through yogic discipline. Yogic discipline is needed for "...the progressive incorporation of the Supreme and the establishment of His reign upon earth." (page 2).

The Mother's view on religion forms one of the most interesting aspects of these conversations. The Mother states that it is religious fundamentalism that stands in the way of spiritual life. True religion belongs to the higher mind of humanity. Religion may be divine in its ultimate origin, but in actual practice it is more human than divine. The inner value of things can be realised only by a truly objective and detached mentality. Therefore, yoga should be practised by one who has nothing to support him except his faith in the Divine.

The relevance of the Mother's observations cannot be minimised in today's excessively materialistic world. The Mother's treatise for the betterment of humanity is not based on abstract metaphysics and a theoretical spiritual dogma. It is, instead, based on a sympathetic perception of an ordinary man's spiritual traumas in a world which seeks progressively to trap him in its materialistic jaws.

This book comes as a boon to those who are eager to learn, and to assimilate its truths into their own being. Its spiritually revitalising force can leave an indelible impression on the reader's mind.

Dr. Rama Nair

A REVIEW ARTICLE

(Continued from page 355)

ences to Karl Marx, Arnold J. Toynbee, Oswald Spengler, Maciver, T. H. Green, Bosanquet, Harold Laski, Sorokin, Fritjof Capra and many others are scattered throughout. Chapters on sociological and economic ideas of Swamiji make excellent reading, although one may not agree with all that has been said in them. Santwana Dasgupta's rejection of E. P. Chelishev's view that Swami Vivekananda was a utopian thinker (as also of Prof. Benoy Kumar Sarkar's observation that Swamiji was a romantic and not a scientific socialist) deserves special notice. Another important fact brought out

by her is that even though spirituality does not fit within the dialectics of Karl Marx, socialist countries have developed a liking for Swamiji's views on human emancipation, progress and peace.

The book can be profitably used by students, academicians, planners and politicians. Santwana Dasgupta deserves kudos for presenting Swamiji's views in a systematic manner. Even printing mistakes which appear on almost every page do not, in any way, mar its value. But they need to be rectified in the next edition.

PRACTICAL SPIRITUALITY

DEVOTEE (to Sri Ramakrishna): "Sir, we hear that you go into samadhi and experience ecstasy...see God. If you do, please show Him to us."

MASTER: "Everything depends on God's will. What can a man do? While chanting God's name, sometimes tears flow and at other times the eyes remain dry. While meditating on God, some days I feel a great deal of inner awakening, and some days I feel nothing.

"A man must work. Only then can he see God. One day, in an exalted mood, I had a vision of the Haldarpukur (lake). I saw a low-caste villager drawing water after pushing aside the green scum. Now and then he took up the water in the palm of his hand and examined it. In that vision it was revealed to me that the water cannot be seen without pushing aside the green scum that covers it; that is to say, one cannot develop love of God or obtain His vision without work. Work means meditation, japa, and the like. The chanting of God's name and glories is work too. You may also include charity, sacrifice, and so on.

"If you want butter, you must let the milk turn to curd. It must be left in a quiet place. When the milk becomes curd, you must work hard to churn it. Only then can you get butter from the milk."

DEVOTEE: "That is true, sir. Work is certainly necessary. One must labour hard. Only then does one succeed. There is so much to read! The scriptures are endless."

MASTER: "How much of the scriptures can you read? What will you gain by mere reasoning? Try to realize God before anything else. Have faith in the guru's words,

and work. If you have no guru, then pray to God with a longing heart. He will let you know what He is like.

"What will you learn of God from books? As long as you are at a distance from the market-place you hear only an indistinct roar. But it is quite different when you are actually there. Then you hear and see everything distinctly. You hear people saying: 'Here are your potatoes. Take them and give me the money.'

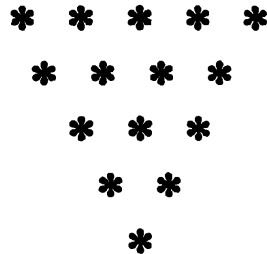
"From a distance you hear only the rumbling noise of the ocean. Go near it and you will see many boats sailing about, birds flying, and waves rolling.

"One cannot get true feeling about God from the study of books. This feeling is something very different from book-learning. Books, scriptures, and science appear as mere dirt and straw after the realization of God.

"The one thing needful is to be introduced to the master of the house. Why are you so anxious to know beforehand how many houses and gardens, and how many government securities, the master possesses? The servants of the house would not allow you even to approach these, and they certainly would not tell you about their master's investments. Therefore, somehow or other become acquainted with the master, even if you have to jump over the fence or take a few pushes from the servants. Then the master himself will tell you all about his houses and gardens and his government securities. And what is more, the servants and the door-keeper will salute you when you are known to the master."

from The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna

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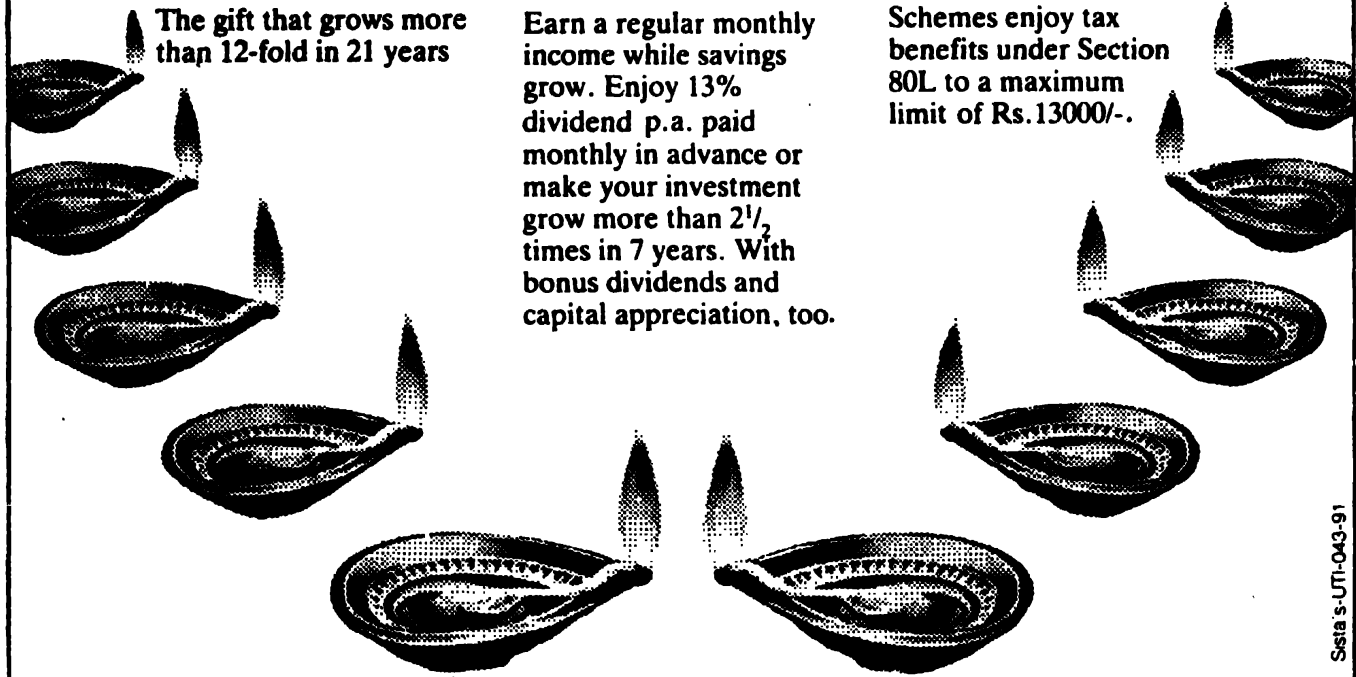
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SEPTEMBER 1991

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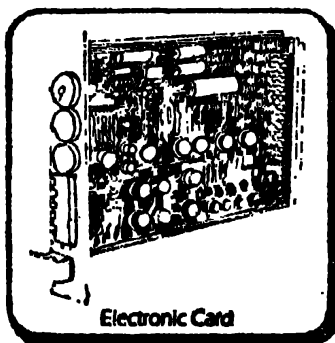
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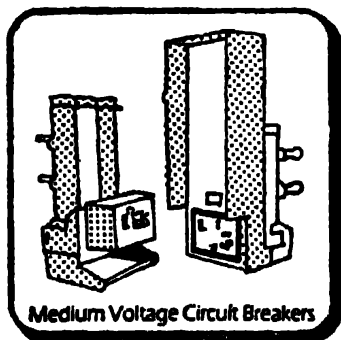
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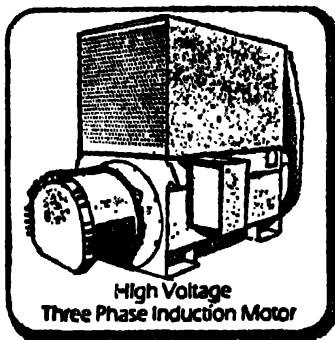
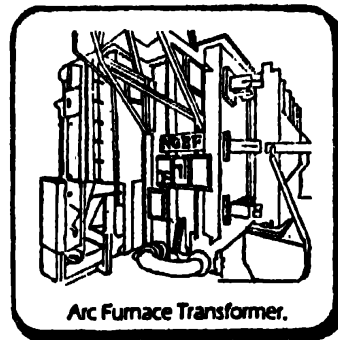
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The Lord, O Arjuna, dwells in the hearts of all beings, causing all beings by His Maya, to revolve, (as if) mounted on a machine.

— Gita, VIII. 61

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Was Sri Ramakrishna the Saviour of India merely? It is this narrow idea that has brought about India's ruin, and her welfare is an impossibility so long as this is not rooted out...The distinction between man and woman, between the rich and the poor, the literate and illiterate, Brahmins and Chandalas—he lived to root out all. And he was the harbinger of Peace—the separation between Hindus and Mohammedans, between, Hindus and Christians, all are now things of the past. That fight about distinctions that there was, belonged to another era. In this Satya-Yuga the tidal wave of Ramakrishna's Love has unified all.

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Arise! Awake!
And stop not till the Goal is reached.

Prabuddha Bharata

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The Divine Message IN PRAISE OF GENESA

अजं निर्विकल्पं निराकारमेकं निरानन्दमानन्दमद्वैतपूर्णम् ।
परं निर्गुणं निर्विशेषं निरीहं परब्रह्मरूपं गणेशं भजेम ॥

O Lord, Thou art the One unborn, absolute and formless ; Thou art beyond Bliss and again art Bliss itself—the One and the Infinite. Thou art the Supreme, without attributes, differentiation and desire. Thou art verily the Supreme Brahman. Thee, O Ganeśa, do we worship.

गुणातीतमानं चिदानन्दरूपं चिदाभासकं सर्वगं ज्ञानगम्यम् ।
मुनिध्येयमाकाशरूपं परेशं परब्रह्मरूपं गणेशं भजेम ॥

Thy nature is beyond attributes. Thou art the embodiment of Intelligence and Bliss, the Effulgent Spirit, the All-pervading, the goal of knowledge. Thou art the object of meditation to the sages, formless and omnipresent, like ether. Thou art the Supreme Lord, the Supreme Brahman. Thee, O Ganeśa, do we worship.

जगत्कारणं कारणज्ञानरूपं सुरादिं सुखादिं गुणेशं गणेशम् ।
जगद्व्यापिनं विश्ववन्द्यं सुरेशं परब्रह्मरूपं गणेशं भजेम ॥

Thou art the Cause of the world, the Primal Knowledge, the Origin of gods, the Origin of bliss, the Lord of Gunas, the Lord of heavenly hosts. Thou pervadest the universe, and art worshipped by all. Thou art the Lord of gods, Thou art verily the Supreme Brahman. Thee, O Ganeśa, do we worship.

from Ganeśa Stava

Greatness of Ganesa

Worship of the divine forms should not end in mere static piety, but must bring about tangible change in one's character and purification of heart. However amorphous may be our conceptions about God in the beginning, as we proceed to try to live the spiritual life things appear in new light. Veil after veil lifts and spiritual enquiry gathers its own momentum. There is no failure in spiritual life. Even a spark is enough to burn down the whole forest. There is an assurance in the Gītā (II.40): "*Svalpamapyasya dharmasya trāyate mahato bhayāt*" —"Even very little of this dharma saves one from great fear." The Divinity and divine qualities we worship and meditate upon become living and real when we see them manifested in beings like ourselves. These divinities are personifications of purity and perfection. Our prayers should be not merely for the playthings of the world, but for virtues leading to Knowledge and Devotion. It is the only priceless treasure; all else is tinsel.

Upanisadic sages, though they declared boldly: "*Nedam yad idam upāsate*" —"Reality is not what people worship here." —Yet they were aware of the immense value of representative forms and symbols. The evolution of spiritual consciousness begins from an objective phase and culminates in absolute subjectivity. The objective stage is the ladder to reach the summit of non-dual reality. Moreover, the two aspects, form and formlessness, are potent means to the realization of the Infinite Consciousness. Both are equally important. Sri Ramakrishna, wishing to set the endlessly reasoning mind at rest, often advised: "First realize the Divine

Mother, She Herself will tell you whether She is with form or without form." Through the divine forms one 'realizes that oneself and the indwelling pure consciousness, or God, are one. "Īśwara, as the indwelling spirit," writes Dr. Radhakrishnan,

And not as an object who is external to us, is what the Real is. God must cease to be a conceived and apprehended God, but become the inward power by which we live. But this inward experience of God is felt only by the advanced spirits. The simple unreflective child-mind seeks God who is above and not within.¹

Worship of whatever form one undertakes is immaterial, but what matters most is total self-yearning, earnest effort to know the Divine. The Divine knows the innermost thoughts of an aspirant and the subtlest motive behind every wish or prayer. It responds quickly to an earnest prayer. According to Sri Ramakrishna it is enough to have faith in either aspect one conceives of as God—with form or without form. He defended the worship of clay images by saying that to suit different men in different stages of knowledge, these multiplicity of forms are necessary. In his commentary on the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* (I.1.2.), Śaṅkara calls this faith "*Āstikya-buddhi*"—faith in the existence of the Beyond, faith in the Supreme Power. The kindling of this *Āstikya-buddhi* is necessary. Dr. Radhakrishnan observes:

While the Upaniṣads recognise that deliverance is the supreme end of life, they are aware that many are not ready for the supreme sacrifice, the dying to their ego. They need some preparation for it. They ask for emotional satisfactions,

1. Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Principal Upaniṣads* (Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1989, p. 582).

and for their sake devotional and ritualistic practices are tolerated. They are not useless, for they lead us on by the upward path by directing our minds and hearts to the reality of the eternal being, and gradually take us out of ourselves into the true religion of Spirit.²

Therefore, the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* says: “*Śreyo hi dhīro’bhipreyaso vṛṇīte*”—“The wise choose the good in preference to the pleasant. (I.2.2) The simple-minded, for the sake of worldly well-being, prefers *kṣema* (well-being), and a man endowed with *buddhi* (intelligence) chooses *yoga*. The Lord also said in the *Gīta* that “*I look after both the yoga and Kṣema of my devotees.*” The later *Upaniṣads*—e.g. *Śvetāśvatara*—look upon the Reality as the Personal God, who bestows grace. The sage, *Svetāśvatara* declares that the ultimate truth is revealed to one who has “*Yasya deve parā bhaktir, yathā deve tathā gurau*”—“who has the highest devotion for God and Guru, alike”. (VI. 23).

The *Upaniṣads* do not teach narrow dogmas. All symbols of the Divine and all divinities are parts of that ineffable limitless Consciousness. What they insist upon is not limited religious formulations but spiritual experience, direct vision of truth. Choice of symbols and forms are left to an aspirant to make use of and move forward towards the goal of oneness. It is only when the spiritual pursuit becomes lukewarm and secondary that all sectarian evils raise their heads and so-called religious life turns into an arena of petty squabbles. Śiva, Śakti, Viṣṇu, Christ, or Gaṇeśa—all these personal gods are attempts by devotees to see and comprehend, through them, the non-dual reality. With their faith and strengthened by their filial love, numbers received grace and guidance from the Omniscient Divine. The direct vision of that Deity and intimate relation-

ship with that Godhead cannot be brushed aside as fantasy. To accept only as real what our limited senses convey to the mind, and reject mystical experiences outright, as hallucinations, is nothing but intellectual vanity. That there are traders who try to sell their spiritual merchandise to the gullible, is also true.

All Hindu divinities worshipped today, except some of the minor ones of mythology, can be traced to the *Vedas*—the earliest of repositories. What appeared in seed form, or as of nebulous description, in course of evolution emerged assuming distinct personality of its own with well-defined attributes. The god Gaṇeśa owes his origin to the *Vedas*. In the *R̥g Veda* (II.23.1), the name of Gaṇapati was an epithet used for Br̥haspati, the god of wisdom and Sage of sages. He is also called the Lord of sacred speech and the Patron of speakers and inspired poets. He is also depicted as the Protector from sins and obstacles (X. 64). There is also an example of his valour, when he stormed into the impregnable mountain caves and retrieved cattle, horses and riches stolen by the demons called *Pāṇis*. But in the *Veda* there is no mention that Br̥haspati was an elephant-headed god.

The legend how Gaṇapati came to acquire an elephant head is described in the *Purāṇas*—in *Brahma Vaivarta*, *Skanda*, and specially in *Śiva-rudra*. Pārvalī, Supreme Māyā, fashioned from the elements of her body a handsome strong boy and loved him as her own son. She stationed this boy, staff in hand, at her door to guard it, as the chief of her *Gaṇas* (attendants). Gaṇeśa stood at the door to carry out the orders of his mother that no one should come into the house without her permission. When Śiva came and wanted to enter his house, Gaṇeśa, not knowing he was Śiva, brandished his staff to stop him. Infuriated by this affront, Śankara ordered his *gaṇas* (attendants) to

2. Ibid. p. 132.

throw out the boy. Enraged, they approached and fought with this heroic son of Durgā. He bashed them all with his club and they fled in all directions. Then Śiva himself came to defeat this formidable foe. Viṣṇu too entered the battle to defeat the mighty hero. Finally, Śiva cut off the head of Gaṇeśa with his trident. When Durgā saw the slain body of her beautiful son, she became furious and assumed the form of Caṇḍikā. She started destroying the world. Even Brahmā and Viṣṇu could not do anything before Mahāsakti. It was only at the intervention of sage Nārada that finally the Mother became pleased and asked them to revive her child. They went to the north as directed by Śiva, to cut off the head of whomsoever they first encountered. The first thing they met was an elephant with a single tusk. Taking its head, they fastened it to Gaṇeśa, and with Śiva's blessings he regained life.

According to the *Brahma Vaivarta Purāṇa*, when Paraśurāma wanted to meet Śiva and Pārvatī while they were asleep, but was refused permission by Gaṇeśa, who was at the door Paraśurāma was angered and shot his deadly missile called Paraśu and it hit and broke one tusk of Gaṇapati. Therefore Gaṇeśa is called Ekadanta—the god with one tusk.

Such celestial qualities of Bṛhaspati, viz., with divine wisdom, the lord of sacred speech, the chief of gods, the patron of speakers and inspired poets, of mighty power and invincible strength—all these find their wonderful expression in the image of Gaṇeśa. The elephant, as a rule, is majestic, serene, harmless, independent, and no obstacle can stand before its formidable strength. It is also known for its astonishing memory and agility. In Indian scriptures the elephant has earned its place, awesome, auspicious and adorable. Indra's vehicle, the mighty elephant Airāvata; Gajendra, the king of elephants in the *Bhāgavata*, and the

elephant that always accompanies goddess Lakṣmī, are famous. In the *Jātaka Tales*, Buddha was once born as a gentle, wise white elephant. Because of this Gajānana has become popular with an elephant head.

Ridiculous though it may seem, that huge Gajānana rides on a tiny mouse. It is said that *muṣaka*, or mouse is speech. A mouse can go to any nook and corner to explore. Nothing can be hidden from it. In the *R̥g Veda*, speech is described as pervasive. (X. 125) Words can describe everything in the world. Nothing can escape its comprehending net.

Another plausible esoteric interpretation is that one's ego should be as small as a tiny and lowly mouse. With big bloated ego, man inevitably invites misery, enmity of his fellow beings, and unhappiness. With subdued ego, on the other hand, he can overcome obstacles and live happily and contentedly. This is connoted by the huge belly and smiling face of the tender deity. On a powerless ego one can easily ride, but in most cases people are ridden and goaded by uncontrollable ego—like "*dustāśvā iva sārathēh*"—"the wicked horses of a charioteer." It is difficult to obliterate completely the ego or 'I-sense', therefore it should be our aim to keep it in its proper place, as tiny as possible. Such harmless ego is called 'ripe ego' by Sri Ramakrishna.

Gaṇeśa is worshipped throughout the length and breadth of India by Hindus, Jains, and Buddhists alike. In the past ages the fame of this deity did not remain confined to India, but spread also to Tibet, Nepal, Mongolia, Cambodia, Indonesia, Afghanistan, China, Japan, Mexico and Central America. Archaeological discoveries have brought to light many temples, images, carvings and plates of an elephant-faced god which lend credence to the immense popularity of this deity. In Roman religion, Janus, the auspicious god, occupied an important

place. "Some scholars regard Janus as the god of all beginnings and believe that his association with doorways is derivative. He was invoked as the first of any gods in regular liturgies. The Beginning of the day, month and year were sacred to him."³ Entrance to all principal gods must be made through him. The month January is named for him. Sir William Jones, the celebrated British orientalist, compared the striking similarities between Janus and Gaṇeśa in one of his essays, "On the Gods of Italy and Greece".

In Ellora caves, a series of magnificent Gupta-period (sixth to eighth century A.D.) rock-cut temples, the images of Gaṇeśa can be seen. Many famous temples and places in South India and Maharashtra, and some famous *Svayambhumurties*—images that sprang into existence spontaneously—of Gaṇapati are found in Kashmir and are popular places of pilgrimage. There has been an exclusive sect called *Gāṇapatyās*, though no longer prominent, which worshipped the deity as the supreme reality or Brahman. This sect must have come into existence in the fifth century A.D. and was at its height in about the tenth century. Later, under the influence of *Śāktism* (the worship of Śakti) six separate cults sprang up that venerated different forms of the god, Mahāgaṇapati, Haridrāgaṇapati, Swarṇagaṇapati, and Santānagaṇapati.

The *Gaṇapati Upaniṣad*, a minor Upaniṣad, must have been written during the heyday of the *Gāṇapatyās*. It extols Gaṇeśa as the substratum of the manifest universe. It says: "*Tvam ānandamayah, tvam brahmayah, tvam saccidānanda advitiyo'si, tvam pratyakṣam brahma'si*"—"Thou art full of bliss, and pure consciousness; Thou art Saccidānanda; Thou art verily Brahman."

Yogis and Tantrics believe that Gaṇeśa is

established in *Mūlādhāra cakra*—the psychic centre where potential energy is sleeping. When he becomes active and bestows his grace, the Kundalinī Śakti is roused. That is, spiritual awakening occurs. The *Gaṇapati Upaniṣad* states: "*Tvam mūlādhārasthito nityam*"—"Thou art eternally established in the Mūlādhāra." Śāṅkara in his commentary quotes yajñavalkya's advice, "O Gārgi, before meditation, worship Gaṇapati with fruits and sweetmeats."⁴ In *Śāradātilak Tantra*, fifty different forms and equal powers of Gaṇeśa are described. Some of his forms are Vighnarāja, Vighneśa, Vināyaka, Trilocana, Ekadanta, Surpakarṇa, Lambodara, Sumukha, Varada, and so on. Some of his powers are: Śanti, Svasti, Saraswatī, Swāhā, Śubhadā, Medhā, Kānti, Suyaśā, and the like. There is a separate Gāyatrī mantra of Gaṇeśa which devotees of the Deity use for meditation.

*Ekdamṣṭrāya vidmahe vakratundāya
dhīmahi,*

Tanno vighna pravodayāt.

*We contemplate on the One-tusked God;
we meditate upon the Elephant-faced One.
May He remove all the obstacles in our
spiritual path and illumine our consciousness.*

Āstikās, those who have firm faith, believe that the adorable son of Gaurī destroys the ills that flesh is heir to. He destroys likewise the ills of this *samsāric* existence, the cycle of births and deaths.

Śāṅkara, therefore, sings in ecstasy the glory of Gaṇeśa: "Immutable, destroyer of perils, indweller in the hearts of yogis, the elephant-faced Lord with a single tusk, I worship Thee in adoration!"

Gajānana with serene and happy countenance sits like an immovable rock. His firm posture reminds us of one of the Psalms—"Be still, and know that I am God."

3. *The new Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 1974, vol. V. p. 517.

4. *The complete works of Swami Vivekananda*, Advaita Ashrama Calcutta, 1989, vol. I. p. 307.

The Indian Vision Of God as Mother

SWAMI RANGANATHANANDA

(Continued from the previous issue)

If, in the character of an individual, the 'mother-heart' stands for love, purity, and fearlessness, it is also a truth within the cosmos—explains convincingly the internationally known speaker and author.

The Devī Māhātmyam is the most authoritative book on the subject of God as Mother ; it is known also as *Durgā Saptasatī* and *Chandī*. Beginning with the *Vāg-Ambhṛṇī Sūkta* of the *R̥g Veda* (10.125), the oldest book of humanity which according to many scholars, has directly influenced the *Devī Māhātmyam*, the vision of God as Mother became the focus of devotion and philosophical and mystical exposition in India down the ages. Thus sing *Sūktas* 3, 4, and 5 (as rendered by Thomas Coburn in his book referred to above, page. 256):

I am the queen who brings treasures together
wise, foremost of those worthy of worship,
The gods have put me in many places,
variously abiding, of manifold presence.
Through me a man eats food ; he who sees,
who breathes, who hears what is spoken
(does so through me).
Unknowing, they depend upon me: Hear,
O famous one—I am telling you
(something worthy of faith).
I myself proclaim this (state of affairs) which
is approved by gods and men,
Whomsoever I wish, I make mighty—a
Brāhmaṇa, a seer, a sage.

What is the *māhātmyam*, or glory, of the *Devī*, or the Divine Mother ? She is conceived as the universal *Śakti* or energy and the whole universe is the expression of that *Śakti* ; She brings forth this world from within Herself, protects it, and finally reabsorbs it into Herself at the time of final dissolution. That is how the *Devī Māhātmyam* deals with the concept of God

as Mother. This spiritual truth is inculcated through many a myth and legend. The philosophy behind all this myth and legend is, the truth that *Cit Śakti*, the energy of Consciousness, is the ultimate reality behind the universe and that it is Masculine-Feminine, as *Brahman-Māyā*, as *Śiva-Śakti*, as Impersonal-Personal. Its quiescent state is the masculine aspect and Its active state is the feminine aspect. It is the integral unity of *Nityā* and *Līlā*, Eternity and Time.

The Devī Māhātmyam presents the nature of this Divine *Śakti* through the invocation of *Brahmā*, the Firstborn Cosmic masculine Person from whom the universe evolves (1.75, 77-79 ; and 81-82):

*Tvayaitat dhāryate viśvam
tvayaitat sṛjyate jagat ;
Tvayaitat pālyate devī
tvamatsyante ca sarvadā...*

"By You is supported this whole universe,
by You is projected this whole universe ;
by You is this whole universe protected,
O *Devī*, and You also always re-absorb all
this into Yourself."

*Mahāvidyā mahāmāyā
mahāmedhā mahāsmṛiḥ ;
Mahāmohā ca bhavati
mahādevī mahāsuṛī...*

"You alone are the great knowledge, the great *Māyā* or illusion ; the great insight, the great memory ; You also are the great

delusion, the great Goddess, the great demoness."

*Tvam śrī tvam īśvarī tvam hṛīḥ
tvam buddhiḥ bodha lakṣaṇā ;
Lajjā puṣṭiḥ tathā tuṣṭiḥ
tvam kṣāntiḥ śāntireva ca...*

"You are prosperity and welfare, You are the Supreme, You are modesty, You are the intelligence of the nature of illumination ; You are bashfulness, well-being, also satisfaction ; You are also forbearance and tranquillity."

*Prakṛtistvam ca sarvasya
guṇatraya vibhāvinī ;
Kālarātriḥ mahārātriḥ
moharātriśca dāruṇā...*

"You are Nature (behind) all (the manifested universe), Manifester of the three guṇās (of *sattva*, *rajas*, and *taṃas*) ; You are the dark night (of the periodic cosmic dissolution), the great night (of final dissolution), and the terrible night of delusion."

*Soumyā soumyātarāṣeṣa
soumyebhyastvatisundarī ;
Parāparāṇām paramā
tvameva parameśvarī...*

"You are pleasing, more pleasing than all the pleasing things ; You are the Supreme beyond the high and the ordinary ; You alone are the Supreme Queen."

*Yacca kiñcit kvacit vastu
sadasad vākhilātmike ;
Tasya sarvasya yā śaktiḥ
sā tvam kim stūyase mayā...*

"Whatever or wherever a thing exists, effect or cause, O Self of the entire cosmos, and whatever power they all possess, You are all that ; how can You be extolled by me (in words) ?"

The Sanskrit word for nature is the feminine word *Prakṛti* ; and *Prakṛti* includes,

unlike the word nature, not only the whole range of the objective world, but also the world of subject, the world of consciousness, that observes it and handles it. This *Prakṛti* of a two-fold totality, *aparā-prakṛti*, or ordinary nature subject to change, and *parā-prakṛti* or higher nature, which is *jivabhūtām mahābaho*, *yayedam dhānyate jagat*—"consists of intelligence, O Mighty-armed, by which this universe is sustained" (*Gītā*, 7.5). And the Divine Mother is the totality of that two-fold *Prakṛti* ; She is also called *Cit Śakti*, consciousness-energy ; *Parā Śakti*, Supreme energy ; *Ādyā Śakti*, Primordial energy. And this world is the *Līlā* or play of that Divine energy. If modern astrophysics conceives of the ultimate reality, out of which the cosmos has come through a big bang, as an inert background material, the cosmology of Indian philosophy of Vedānta, conceives of that ultimate reality, out of which the universe has evolved as infinite Pure Consciousness. And if consciousness is the essential stuff of the ultimate reality, its description in terms of personality becomes perfectly valid. And so ancient Vedānta, and Sri Ramakrishna today, speak of the ultimate reality in its two-fold aspect of *Nirguṇa-saguṇa*, the Impersonal-personal, *Nirākāra-sākāra*, the Formless-Formful, as Brahman and *Śakti*, *Śiva* and *Kālī*. Sri Ramakrishna expounds this truth in these luminous words (*Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, p. 271):

Govinda: "Revered Sir, why does the Divine Mother have a black complexion ?"

Master: "You see Her as black because you are far away from Her. Go near and you will find Her devoid of all colour. The water of a lake appears black from a distance. Go near and take the water in your hand and you will see that it has no colour at all. Similarly the sky looks blue from a distance. But look at the atmosphere near you ; it has no colour. The nearer you come to God, the more you will realize that He has neither name nor form. If you move away

from the Divine Mother, you will find Her blue, like the grass-flower. Is *Syāmā* (Kālī) male or female?...That which is *Syāmā* is also Brahman. That which has form, again, is without form. That which has attributes, again, has no attributes. Brahman is *Śakti*; *Śakti* is Brahman. They are not two. These are only two aspects, male and female, of the same Reality, Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute."

Sri Ramakrishna loved to sing the following song about Kālī, the Divine Mother (*Ibid.*, p. 386):

Is Kālī, My Mother, really black?
The Naked One, of blackest hue,
Lights the lotus of the Heart...

He compares the immobile Brahman to a snake coiled up, and *Śakti* to the same snake in motion. That motion constitutes the evolution of the universe from within Itself, which is entirely within the jurisdiction of that *Śakti* aspect of the Divine Reality, the Divine Mother, which also is the inseparable power of Brahman. Here Sri Ramakrishna introduces the concept and term *Māyā* as an alternative to *Śakti*; both mean the one Divine power which has manifested this universe from within Herself. Brahman is the One; the world is the many; and that One is hidden in the many. It is hidden by the many. This is called the *Līlā* or play of *Māyā*. Śaṅkarācārya describes *Māyā* as (*Vivekacūdāmaṇi*, verse 109): *mahādbhutā anirvacanīya-rūpī*—"a great mystery, of the nature of the indeterminate or the undefinable." Expounding the immense comprehensiveness of this concept of *Māyā* in his lecture on "*Maya and the Evolution of the Conception of God*" in London in 1896, Swami Vivekananda says (*The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. II, p. 112):

What you call matter, or spirit, or mind, or anything else you may like to call them, the fact remains the same: we cannot say that they are, we cannot say that they are not. We cannot say they are one, we cannot say they are many. This

eternal play of light and darkness—indiscriminate, indistinguishable, inseparable—is always there. A fact, yet at the same time not a fact; awake and at the same time asleep. This is a statement of facts, and this is what is called Maya. We are born in this Maya, we live in it, we think in it, we dream in it. We are philosophers in it, we are spiritual men in it, nay, we are devils in this Maya, and we are gods in this Maya. Stretch your ideas as far as you can make them higher and higher, call them infinite or by any other name you please, even these ideas are within this Maya. It cannot be otherwise, and the whole of human knowledge is a generalisation of this Maya trying to know it as it appears to be. This is the work of Nama-Rupa—name and form. Everything that has form, everything that calls up an idea in your mind, is within Maya; for everything that is bound by the laws of time, space, and causation is within Maya.

This *Māyā*, says Sri Ramakrishna, has two aspects, namely, *avidyā-māyā*, *Māyā* of ignorance, and *Vidyā-māyā*, *Māyā* of knowledge. And every human being is free to choose to be under the one or the other. What is called evil comes out of men and women when they allow themselves to be under the control of *avidyā-māyā*, and they consequently become stagnant at the sensate level, become a problem to themselves and to society, and miss their evolutionary march to spiritual freedom and fulfilment. *Vidyā-māyā*, on the other hand, helps them to understand and manifest ethical and humanistic values, to become a friend and helper of society, and advances them on that human evolutionary road to spiritual freedom.

It is the privilege of every human being to convert his or her heart into a play-ground of the forces of *Vidyā-māyā*. If the world has come from the Divine *Śakti*, evil in the world is as much the Divine Mother's play as the good also is. The dirt on the earth, as much as its clean and beautiful things, are all only condensations of solar radiation. Mother loves all her children, but specially loves those who struggle against the evil forces in her universe, as also those who

courageously face even death in that struggle; that is what is hailed as the hero of all tragic dramas.

Accordingly, the religion centred in the Divine Mother has been the nursery of several heroic souls in the Indian tradition, like Shīvajī and Guru Govind Singh. That religion does not say to humanity the soothing idea that all good comes from God and all evil comes from an entity called the devil. No, the Ultimate Reality is both life and death, not life only. "Whose shadow is both immortality and mortality," sang the *R̥g-Veda* several thousand years ago (10.121.2):

*Ya ātmadā baladā yasya viśva
upāsate praśiṣam yasya devāḥ ;
Yasyachāyā amṛtam yasya mṛtyuḥ
kasmāi devāya haviṣā vidhema...*

"Unto Him who gives us our individuality, who gives us strength, whose commands all beings, together with the gods, obey, whose shadow is immortality as well as mortality, we offer our oblation!"

The philosophy, spirituality, and ritual centred in the religion of the Divine Mother is based on this philosophy of Advaita, non-dualism. *Devī* literally means the luminous female, the goddess; but, as used in the *Devī Māhātmya*, it means The Goddess, the one Divine Mother of all, the *Parā Śakti* which is the dynamic feminine counterpart of the immobile masculine *Parama Śiva*. They are inseparable from each other, like word and its meaning, as expressed by ancient India's greatest poet and dramatist, Kālidāsa, in the opening verse of his *Kumāra-sambhavam*:

*Vāgarthāviva sampṛktau vāgartha
pratipattaye ;
Jagataḥ pitarau vande Pārvaṇī
Parameśvarau ...*

"In order to achieve the comprehension of word and meaning, I salute the parents of the universe, Pārvaṇī and Parameśvara, who are inseparable like word and its meaning."

In Vedānta and the Tantra system, Brahman and *Śakti*, or *Śiva* and *Sakti*, are used alternatively. Śiva or Brahman is immobile, the energy of movement is in the *Śakti* or the immanent aspect. This world of multiplicity, this world of manifestation, is thus in the realm of *Śakti*. When one transcends this world of duality in the deepest *nirvikalpa* state of *Samādhi*, one realizes Brahman, the impersonal aspect of the Ultimate Reality. But very few can reach that dimension. All else come under the jurisdiction of *Śakti*, the personal aspect of the Ultimate Reality. This is what is conveyed in the passage from Vivekananda about *Māyā* quoted earlier, that we are all under the jurisdiction of *Māyā* which, as the *Cinmayī Śakti*, the energy of infinite Consciousness, is viewed as a person, as the Divine Mother. We are all under the jurisdiction of *Śakti* from that point of view, whether we know it or not. The Divine Mother is, and remains, the supreme reality for you and for me, and for all, except when you or I merge in that deep *nirvikalpa* state beyond the jurisdiction of the Divine Mother and become one with the transcendental Impersonal Brahman. Therefore, in all aspects of life and work and inter human relations, we all live and move and have our being in the Divine Mother, like fish in water.

5. Śaṅkarācārya on the Divine Mother

This glory of the Divine Mother is expressed by India's greatest philosopher of the eighth century A.D., Śaṅkarācārya, in some of his hymns. He was a great teacher of Advaita, non-duality. He built up the unified structure of Indian philosophy, and intellectually and spiritually influenced the

whole of India during his brief life of thirty-two years. About his greatness, the late internationally known Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, President of India, writes (*Indian Philosophy*, Vol. II. p. 446):

It is impossible to read Śaṅkara's writings, packed as they are with serious and subtle thinking, without being conscious that one is in contact with a mind of a very fine penetration and profound spirituality. With his acute feeling of the immeasurable world, his stirring gaze into the abysmal mysteries of spirit, his unswerving resolve to say neither more nor less than what could be proved, Śaṅkara stands out as a heroic figure of the first rank in the somewhat motley crowd of religious thinkers of the medieval India. His philosophy stands forth complete, needing neither a before nor an after.

The comprehensiveness and breadth of Śaṅkara's religious outlook and sympathies made the people of India to confer on him a unique title, namely, *Ṣaṁmata-sthāpanā-cārya*, 'one who established six religions'! And this great philosopher was also a passionate devotee of the Divine Mother whose glory he has sung in several soul-stirring hymns. He has sung in praise of the Impersonal Ātman and Brahman, as also of many other divinities of the Hindu pantheon, knowing all of them to be manifestations of the one and non-dual Ultimate Reality. One of his many famous hymns is *Śivānanda Lohari*, 'Waves of the Bliss of Śiva'. In its very opening verse, he sings the glory of *Śakti*, the Divine Mother, more than that of Śiva, which he reserves to the rest of the hymn:

*Śivāḥ śaktyā yukto yadi bhavati kiñcit
prabhavitum ;
Na cedevam devo nakṣalu kuśalaḥ
spanditumapi...*

"If Śiva is united with *Śakti*, He becomes capable to project this universe ; if not, He is not capable of even moving His limbs!"

In the Indian presentation of Śiva as *Naṭarāja*, 'the Great Dancer', dancing the world of manifestation into existence, we have the integration of Śiva and *Śakti* into a unity. There is another wonderful hymn of Śaṅkarācārya where he even goes into a humorous eulogy of the feminine at the cost of the masculine, as it were. That is the *Devyāparādha Kṣamāpaṇa-stotram*, 'Hymn asking for forgiveness from the *Devī* for mistakes and sins'. There one finds that the last line sung in refrain in most of the verses is: *Kuputro jāyeta, kvacidapi kumātā na bhavati...* "There may be a *kuputra*, or bad son, but never a *kumātā*, bad mother". A son or daughter may reject a mother, but a mother will never reject her son or daughter. That is the mother-heart ; that, raised to the infinite dimension, is the heart of the *Devī*. Addressing Her by one of Her many sweet and dear names as *Bhavānī*, wife of *Bhava* (i.e. Śiva), Śaṅkarācārya sings (verse 7):

*Citā-bhasmā lepo garalamaśanam
dik-paṭa-dharo
jaṭādhārī kaṇṭhe bhujaḡapati-hārī-
paśupatiḥ ;
Kapālī bhūteśo bhujati jagadīśaika-padaṡīm
Bhavānī tvat pāṇigrahaṇa-paripāṭi
phalamidam...*

"One who was smearing his body with ashes taken from the cremation ground, whose food was poison, whose clothes were the four quarters of space, whose hair was matted, who wore a snake as a garland on his neck and was the Lord of animals, who uses a skull as an eating bowl, and was the Lord of Bhūtas or ghouls—that Śiva now holds the undisputed status of the Lord of the whole universe ; O Bhavānī, this is only because of His being married to you!"

The human heart seeks and responds to the love of the mother-heart ; in verses 10 and 11 of the hymn, Śaṅkara sings :

*Āpatsu magnaḥ smaraṇam tvadīyam
karomi durge karuṇārṇaveśi ;
Naitat śaṭhatvam mama bhāvayethāḥ
kṣudhātṛṣārtā janānīm smaranti ...*

"Immersed in dangers, O Durgā, I turn my mind to you, O Ocean of Mercy and spouse of Śiva ; please don't consider this as my deceitfulness, since children remember their mother when they suffer from hunger and thirst."

*Jagadamba vicitramatra kim
paripūrṇā karuṇā'sti cenmayi ;
Aparādhaparamparāvṛtam
nahi mātā samupekṣate sutam ...*

"O Mother of the Universe, what wonder is there if You have full compassion on me who am enveloped in a succession of sins! For a mother, never forsakes her son."

When I recite some of these verses during my lectures in America or Europe, listeners are very much impressed with the absence of fear and trembling, and with the sense of love and fearlessness, the sense of intimacy that is present in the approach to God as Mother. This is the expression of the *bhakti* in the heart of a jñāni that Śaṅkara was, one who had realized the inseparable unity of the Impersonal-personal God.

In fact, one of the songs composed in Sanskrit on Sarada Devi, the Holy Mother, by Swami Abhedananda, a direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, who helped Swami Vivekananda's Vedanta work in the U.S.A., which we often sing during the evening service in the centres of the Ramakrishna Order in India and abroad, also expresses a similar sentiment of mother-child love relation:

*Sneḥena badhnāsi manasmadīyam
doṣān aśeṣān saguṇīkaroṣi ;
Ahetunā no dayase sudoṣān
svānke gṛhītvā yadidam vicitram...*

"With love You bind our hearts to You, and all our evils You convert into good ; spontaneous is Your compassion on us who are with evils, what a wonder is this that You take us on Your lap even with all our evils!"

That explains the great hold of the Mother Goddess concept on the Indian mind. We understood that here is a person who embodies a unique value, namely, love. If God is love, as many scriptures say, here is a unique expression of that love. This value is found in the female of all species---the urge to care for and protect the offspring, even at the cost of one's life. Some years ago, I read in one of the newspapers a report of a very touching incident that took place somewhere in Georgia in the U.S.S.R. One out of a pack of wolves chased a flock of deer in a forest ; the flock ran for safety. A fawn entered into the hollow of a tree for safety and its mother covered the hollow with her belly to protect her offspring. Soon a bear appeared and killed that chasing wolf, and the fawn and its mother were saved.

In his book *Bhakti Yoga*, Swami Vivekananda expounds the truth that love knows no fear (*Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. III, pp. 88-89):

Love conquers naturally all fear. Think of a young mother in the street, and a dog barking at her ; she is frightened, and flies into the nearest house. But suppose, the next day, she is in the street with her child and a lion springs upon the child. Where will be her position now ? Of course, in the very mouth of the lion protecting the child. Love conquers all fear. Fear comes from the selfish idea of cutting one's self off from the universe. The smaller and the more selfish I make myself, the more is my fear.

If the mother-heart is a truth of life within an individual, and if its expression in life makes for fearlessness, Vedānta says, it is

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Sri Ramakrishna Touched Them— Nafar Bandyopadhyay

SWAMI PRABHANANDA

Drawing from various sources, the scholar-monk who is Assistant Secretary of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, Belur Math, reconstructs the little known life of a devotee, showing how the grace of the Master touched and purified the lives of many earnest souls.

AFTER his spiritual striving and divine madness, Sri Ramakrishna came back to Kamarpukur where he was married to Sarada Devi in May 1859. Following the marriage he stayed on at Kamarpukur for about one year and seven months. Again, to honour family custom he visited his father-in-law's house at Jayrambati in 1860, when Sarada was about to complete her seventh year.¹ Sri Ramakrishna stayed in Jayrambati a few days, and during this period the Mukherjee family, knowing of the Master's love for devotional singing, arranged a *Saṅkīrtana* (an emotional and unritualistic mode of musical worship).² Nafar Bandyopadhyay led in the singing. Hriday, the Master's nephew, was present there too, probably having come to return with his uncle back to Dakshineswar. As Nafar hailed from the same village as Hriday and was everywhere known in the locality as a good singer, it is likely that he was brought by Hriday for the *kīrtan*. Thus it was for the first time that Nafar saw Sri Ramakrishna and felt drawn to him.

Due to Sri Ramakrishna's reminiscing many years later in the presence of Mahendranath Gupta, or 'M', we have an account in the Master's own words recorded

in the *Gospel*.³ Sitting one day in his room at Dakshineswar, the Master was speaking to the devotees about his God-intoxication. He was saying: "Oh, what a state of mind I passed through! When I first had that experience, I could not perceive the coming and going of day and night. People said I was insane. What else could they say? They made me marry. I was then in a state of God-intoxication...I visited my father-in-law's house. They arranged a *kīrtan*, and there was much singing of God's holy name. The *kīrtan* was led by Nafar, Digamber Bandyopadhyay's father...*Khub saṅkīrtan!* What a *kīrtan* it was!"^{3a}

Nafar experienced in his heart a great inflow of devotion, faith, and power. It seemed to him solely due to the presence of Sri Ramakrishna and seeing his overwhelming religious ecstasy and divine intoxication with the thought of God. It appeared to Nafar that Sri Ramakrishna was a perennial fountain of love and divine power encased in a human body. Also, Sri Ramakrishna was evidently pleased with Nafar and his singing. Sri Ramakrishna's yardstick to measure a man was the latter's devotion to God. Once he said, "The fact is, all men

1. Swami Gambhirananda, *Holy Mother, Sri Sarada Devi* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, 1955) p. 28.

2. A. K. Mazumdar, *Chaitanya, His Life and Doctrine*, 1969. P. 143 footnote.

3. 'M', *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, Tr. by Swami Nikhilananda (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, 1985) p. 231, in conjunction with—3a. *Sri Śrī Ramakṛṣṇa Kathāṃṛta*, Vol. II, p. 49.

may look alike from the outside, but some of them have fillings of 'condensed milk'. Cakes may have fillings of milk or powdered black gram (pulses), but they all look alike from the outside. The desire to know God, ecstatic love of Him, and such other spiritual qualities are the 'condensed milk'.⁴ Nafar had some such stuff in him, therefore it was natural that they were attracted to each other.

When the famous preacher Keshab Chandra Sen discovered Sri Ramakrishna and wrote about him in the newspapers, Sri Ramakrishna became well known to the general public almost overnight. Keshab and many others rejoiced in his exuberant genius and love of God. Whoever visited Dakshineswar felt a strange and compelling love and attraction for the divine personality that Sri Ramakrishna never tried to suppress or hide from others. Not only was there his natural childlike spontaneity and the religious power conveyed in his natural actions, but his words were so direct and clear that no one could remain untouched and unmoved by them. All felt in his presence a renewed strength and capacity to strive hard to attain life's goal. In short, the charisma of Sri Ramakrishna, his rationality, and the appeal of his words threw light which made the darkness in others recede. This happened in the case of Nafar too, changing his life in subtle and profound ways.

As already mentioned, both Hridayam and Nafar belonged to the same village of Sihar, being northwest of Jayrambati about one and a quarter miles, and northwest also of Kamarpukur by about four and a half miles. Hriday was the son of the Master's elder sister, so he used to visit Sihar now and then. Hriday was four years younger than his maternal uncle, but very intimate with him. Later on he became the Master's

personal attendant and served him with affection and loyalty.

A few things we know of Sri Ramakrishna's visits to Sihar. He used to be fond of standing alone in front of the vast meadow covering seven or eight square miles of land on the western side of the village. It was often the earnest wish of Hriday that brought him there. During those visits he had many spiritual visions; of which the following, occurring sometime in 1853, are specially remembered.

Once Sri Ramakrishna was travelling in a palanquin to Sihar, when in a divine vision he saw two boys of tender age and beautiful appearance emerge from his own body and start to run and jump in the fields. After such sportings they once again entered his body. Hearing this, Yogeshwari Brahmani, one of Sri Ramakrishna's gurus, later remarked, "Chaitanya is manifesting this time in the body of Nityananda."⁵ Another vision, recorded in the Gospel, the Master recounted: "In Sihar, I fed the cowherd boys. I put sweetmeats into their hands. I saw that those boys were actually the cowherd boys of Vrindavan, and I partook of the sweetmeats from their hands."⁶ Strangely enough the flashes of such visions in Sri Ramakrishna's pure mind proved to be intimations of things to follow. Also it may be supposed that on these visits Nafar could see Sri Ramakrishna to his heart's content.

About one hundred kilometres away from the metropolis of Calcutta, the then capital of British India, Sihar was an old village which had witnessed the rise and fall of several religious upsurges. With the revival of Brahminic cult in the fourth and fifth

5. Swami Saradananda, *Sri Ramakrishna, The Great Master*. Tr. Swami Jagadananda (Madras, Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, 1978.) p. 189.

6. *The Gospel*, p. 232.

4. *The Gospel*, p. 232.

centuries, the traditional Hindus had begun the worship of Śiva, the Mother Goddess, and Vāsudeva. Thereafter, Tantricism spread imperceptibly and began to influence different sections of society. Following the advent of Sri Chaitanya, however, Neo-Vaiṣṇavism spread under the active patronage of Bir Hambir of Viṣṇupur, about twenty-two miles northwest of Sihar. Afterwards, the deity Vasudev (Viṣṇu) took the forms and names of Kālosonā, Nani-chorā, Shyamchānd, and others—different forms of Krishna holding the flute to his lips, Sri Radha always at his side. Nevertheless, orthodox and conservative Brāhmin Vaiṣṇavas of Sihar had their reservations about the Chaitanya-cult, although seventeen of the thirty-four holy places of the Vaiṣṇavas (called *Pathāris*) are located in the district of Hooghly. Side by side, the religious undercurrent of esoteric yogic practices interacted with Vaiṣṇavism to give birth to the Vaiṣṇava *Sahajīya* movement.⁷ Sihar had some of their adherents too, and Sri Ramakrishna was acquainted with some people belonging to this group. He once commented about them: "They do not like the worship of a deity or of an image. They want a living man. That is why one of their sections is called *Kartābhujā*. They worship the *Kartā*, that is to say, the guru as God."

Also he said, "Many of them follow the *Rādhātantra* and take the five elements as aids to their spiritual practice. Employing these, their methods of spiritual discipline are very dirty. It is like entering a house through the back door by which the scavengers come."

A good many of the followers of this and other similarly oriented tantric groups indulged in forbidden practices and immoral activities. One such person came to meet

Sri Ramakrishna. The latter, who could see the soul of the man, turned his back to him. But he came across good people in these sects too. There was one Saday Bābāji, a good singer of *saṅkīrtana*, and a lady devotee by the name of Saraswati Pathar. But the Master noticed in general that superstitious beliefs were again raising their ugly head through these popular cults spread mainly among the lower uneducated sections of society.

However, the orthodox of the upper caste Vaiṣṇavas, zealously guarding their own beliefs, even feared and abhorred the pure Bhakti cult propagated by Sri Chaitanya. Wrote Akshay Kumar Sen:

They jeered at the Sri Chaitanya followers.
At times chased them with bamboos and sticks.

Whenever they sang kirtan glorifying
Gour and Nitai
The villagers used to snatch away their drums.

Nafar Bandopadhyay's house was in the southern part of Sihar known as Koarpur mouza. His grandfather, Ramgovinda Bandyopadhyay, had left his ancestral village of Lakhurdi in Burdwan district, and migrated to this part of the country. He had two wives—with one of them he started a household at Jayrambati, and with the other another household at Sihar. The former wife had borne him a male child named Natabar and the latter a male child named Nafar. The family deity 'Damodar' was placed in his household at Jayrambati.

Nafar had five sons, Ramhriday, Ram-saday, Digambar, Sashibhusan, and Atal. Although Brahmin by caste, taking on priestly duties was not acceptable to the family. The small cultivable land possessed by Nafar was their only source of income. Undoubtedly the family suffered from many

⁷ Sashibhusan Dasgupta, *Obscure Religious Cult*, 1969, Introduction, pp. 33-34.

wants till Nafar's third son, Digambar, met with some good luck, and the dismal situation took a happy turn. There is a story behind this.

Once the grown-up Ramhriday, Ramsaday and Digambar were occupied constructing the mud-clay walls of a new house for the family. Their father was watching as they worked. Somehow Digambar's part was slipshod and not coming up to the mark. Besides this, his father was annoyed with him for being lazy. After a time Digambar's attitude so much annoyed the father that he scolded him severely and struck him with the hubble-bubble he was smoking. While it all was extremely unfortunate, it turned out to be a blessing in disguise. Humiliated, Digambar walked out, left Sihar, and walked to Indesh, en route to the district town of Burdwan where his sister lived. The sister gave him shelter and affection and informed her father. One day Digambar was idling away his time by the side of a road, when an European trader attached to the Mackenzie firm, came riding by on a horse. He was blind drunk, lost his balance, and fell into the roadside ditch. Seeing the whole thing, Digambar hurried to rescue him and helped him get to his bungalow not far off. The man was much pleased with Digambar's assistance and asked him to see him next morning. The good-looking youth, broad-shouldered and of fair complexion, impressed the Sahib, who immediately offered him a small contractor's job. At this Digambar proved a good workman. His willingness to try new things, dexterity and ambition led him up the ladder of self-improvement. He worked for the industry giant and made a fortune for himself. Finally he purchased fourteen *mohallas* of land in Bankura, Midnapore and Hooghly and constructed a fairly large building of brick and mortar, the first such building in Sihar. This he gave to his father, and to fulfil his father's

desire he constructed a beautiful small shrine wherein Nafar installed the stone emblem of the Deity, 'Śrīdhar', actually another of the forms of Viṣṇu.⁸ A salaried Brahmin priest offers daily worship even now. Thereafter, a happy Nafar devoted his time to taking care of 'Śrīdhar' and to singing devotional songs of *Saṅkīrtan*, which it may be supposed, many people in the surrounding area benefitted.

Long before the fabulous rise of Digambar's fortunes, Nafar had surrendered himself at the feet of Sri Ramakrishna. It dawned upon him that the beloved family deity, Śrīdhar-Viṣṇu, was all the time appearing before him in the form of Sri Ramakrishna. About this time Nafar divided the landed property he owned among his five sons. On one portion of the land (said at the time to be haunted or otherwise consecrated) shared with Digambar, a *chandi-mandap* and *natmandir* (open-air, but roofed-over structures usually near a temple) were put up. The *chandi-mandap*, of clay walls and thatched roof, was finally razed to the ground by the great cyclone of 1978. In front of the *chandi-mandap* stood the *natmandira*, also with a roof of thatch. Here

8. The family legend was obtained from Debipada Bandyopadhyay and Bhavani Bandyopadhyay, the two great grandsons of Digambar. Ramlal Chattopadhyay, the nephew of Sri Ramakrishna, gave another story. Once Digambar brought a rosary of one hundred and eight beads and after sprinkling holy Ganga water on it and applying sandal paste, offered it to Sri Ramakrishna for his blessings. The latter returned the rosary, instructing Digambar, "Chant the holy name on this rosary, and sing God's name and glory with drum and cymbal accompaniment. This will do you good. In this Kali-yuga chanting of God's name is essential. This will bring you the fruits of meditation, sacrifices, etc." He sincerely followed the instructions and subsequently became a rich man. (Kamal Krishna Mitra: *Sri Ramakrishna O Antaraṅga Prasanga* (Bengali) second edition, pp. 40-41).

Nafar brought together over the years many a religious festival of *Saṅkīrtan*, and Sri Ramakrishna joined the large gatherings on several occasions, singing and dancing in the ecstasy of love of God. Encircling him others would also participate in the enthusiastic worship, completely forgetting the world around them. Sri Ramakrishna would enter into *Samādhi*, standing transfixed, a bewitching smile lighting his countenance. Those present used to be overwhelmed by a current of divine bliss. Sri Ramakrishna seemed to them like a dynamo of radiant spiritual energy. Nafar and others were astounded by those never to be forgotten scenes of *Saṅkīrtana*, and they cherished the memory of them forever. Nafar felt his life was blessed.

As noted earlier, some of the orthodox sections of people of Bankura and Hoogly districts, including Sihar, resisted for a long time the coming of the Bhakti cult of Chaitanya. It is interesting to note how that resistance was gradually worn down.

Village life of Sihar was dominated by the families of proud Brahmins. Though Sri Ramakrishna's being practically illiterate was known, still he was held by them in high respect. Some of those men, however, were conceited scholars and used to slight him. An interesting episode changed their view and behaviour towards him forever.

A team of Brahmin scholars from Khanakul once visited Sihar, having heard of Sri Ramakrishna's spiritual ecstasies and his attraction for people. Those scholars, who possessed a wider culture than most, knew also that the Master was highly regarded by, and the guru of Keshab Chandra Sen, of Calcutta, so they came to Hriday's house to meet him. Naturally they greeted the Master cordially in their accustomed way and began to converse with him on religious topics, according to their own

manner of dialectics, reasoning and argumentation. It was natural for them to have thus challenged Sri Ramakrishna on some points of Scriptural controversy and started a debate on some subtle question. Though it was possibly not their original intention, in the end, those visitors became highly pleased with the Master and conceded their inferior position before him.

At this time Sri Ramakrishna was the centre of attraction for a large number of people who came to join the *Saṅkīrtan* gatherings held so frequently in and around Sihar. All this was due to Hriday's and Nafar's enthusiasm for organizing and bringing people together for those festivals. The Master too was happy to find so many taking delight in the loud chanting of God's names and glories. These many open-air gatherings were held in a number of places, including the *natmandira* and *chandi-mandapa*. After the Brahmins of Khanakul, more people were attracted. Even Sri Ramakrishna used to be the centre of *Nagarsaṅkīrtanas* when large gatherings used to proceed along the roads and lanes of the villages, as they had once done when Sri Chaitanya preached and chanted throughout Bengal singing "*Harāya namah, Krishna-Yādavāya namah, Gopāla-Govinda, Rāma Sri Madhusūdana*." They used to sing and dance to the melodies of the *Krishna-līlā* (story) and *Saṅgīt* (songs), and induce others to join them. In all these ventures, Nafar Bandyopadhyay was one of the self-appointed leaders, and in this way people of Sihar came to respect Sri Chaitanya. Opposition to the cult of Chaitanya gradually disappeared.

The most important place in the village of Sihar was the temple of Shāntināth, constructed in the seventeenth century.⁹ On one

9. Shāntināth is still standing in good repair, though the natmandira in front was severely

blessed. All but Nafar Bandyopadhyay left for home. The devoted Nafar could perceive the reflection of Lord Śrīdhara, the Deity of his worship, in the person of Sri Ramakrishna. He therefore approached the Master saying, "You are my Śrīdhara, and taking a garland of those *Tulsi* beads, put it round the feet of Sri Ramakrishna. A charming smile broke across the Master's face and the touch of *Tulsi* sent him into deep ecstasy. This convinced Nafar of the genuineness of his vision and deepened his faith. A happy Nafar then took the beads and placed them round his own neck.¹¹ Thus Nafar not only acclaimed Sri Ramakrishna as the living incarnation of the Lord, but in his own heart he became thoroughly convinced and blessed. For the rest of his life he never wavered from this faith and it sustained him through many vicissitudes of his long life.

From a letter of Hriday Mukherjee addressed to the inmates of the Alambazar Math, it was learnt that Nafar looked upon

Sri Ramakrishna as his Child Krishna (Gopāla), and would serve the Lord with that attitude. He would occasionally invite the Master to his house and feed him. Quietly Nafar would sit in the presence of Sri Ramakrishna watching his every movement. This would fill his heart with joy.

While his eldest son, Digambar¹² was making his large fortune, Nafar became more and more disinterested and detached from the thought of worldly prosperity. He devoted his time and energy to the ripening of his devotion to God till he breathed his last. Simple villager that Nafar was, by dint of devotion and spiritual fervour actively took part in the divine sport of the modern incarnation of God. He carved a memorable niche for himself in the wonderful life-history of Sri Ramakrishna, hailed by many the world over as the Beacon in the sea of darkness in the bleak world of strife and bloodshed today.

11. Akshay Kumar Sen, *Śrī Śrī Rāmākṛṣṇa Punthi* (Bengali) 10th edition, pp. 218-19.

12. Digambar kept contact with Sri Ramakrishna. From M's diary it is learnt that he called on Sri Ramakrishna at Dakshineswar on 7th July, 1877 and gave him Re 1/- as *Pranami*.

THE INDIAN VISION OF GOD AS MOTHER

(Continued from page 371)

also a truth within the cosmos as a whole. That is the vision of God as Mother, and Vedānta therefore calls Her *Jagadambā*—*Ambā*, i.e., mother of the *Jagat*, world. Not only in a mother, but also in other areas of human experience, in all parts of the world, you can see verification of the truth of the above statement that love knows no fear. Our country now has soldiers in the snowy Himalayas, living a hard life, guarding the frontiers of India. What makes them face

these challenges? Love for the freedom of the nation. Anyone who loves one's nation, or an ideology, or a worthy cause, experiences less fear compared to one without that love and has contracted oneself to become a mere bundle of complaints and grievances. Love strengthens one to bear stresses and strains with less and less complaint and inner tension.

(to be continued)

Royal Knowledge and Royal Secret

SWAMI AMRITANANDA

The ninth chapter of the Gita contains a great and sacred secret. The learned writer casts illumination on the seeming enigmatic sayings of the Lord and discusses their hidden meaning. The author is Secretary of the Ramakrishna Mission Vidyapith, Madras.

The *Bhagavad Gita* is a popular scripture and has widely been commented upon, alike by scholars, saints and even by statesmen and political thinkers of various hues. It is universal in its appeal and application, and its universality itself puzzles many a scholar. The key to understand the *Gita* is its spirit of discovering the unity behind a world of bewildering diversity. The *Gita* synthesizes the four yogas by removing the notion of conflict between *jñāna* and *karma*, and harmonizing *bhakti* and *jñāna*.

It was Madhusudana Saraswati who for purposes of study and understanding of the *Gita* grouped its eighteen chapters into three divisions of six chapters each. The first six chapters speak mainly of *Karma* or action, the next six chapter, of *Bhakti* or devotion and the last six of *Jñāna* or knowledge. The passing from *karma yoga* to *jñāna yoga* is not smooth as the two paths are somewhat different in nature, and some intervening medium is necessary to make the passage smooth. The middle six chapters, known as *bhakti śaṭaka*, or *upāsana śaṭaka*, perform this function of smoothening. So we see a beautiful edifice raised tier upon tier, and based on the sure foundation of the *Śruti* itself. The ingenuity of the author of the *Gita* is thus remarkable and unique.

The main objective of all the scriptures is to preach *mukti* or freedom as the goal of life. There are various paths prescribed for attaining *mukti*. Scriptures emphasize

in different places the efficacy of one or more of these paths. The *Gita* leaves the choosing of a path to the spiritual aspirant by its recognition of the natural diverse nature of human beings and of the paths, but lays stress on the unity of the goal.

If duty is performed without attachment it leads to purification of the mind. A pure mind can easily grasp the subtle meaning of spiritual truths. Meditation on these truths with purity of mind reveals the true knowledge of *Ātman*. This knowledge confers *mukti*. It is the path of disinterested action with its emphasis on work and is known as *Niṣkāma karma*.

Similarly one can practise love of God and attain a one-pointed mind devoted to God. The liberating knowledge that comes to the mind possessed with love ultimately paves the way to *mukti*. This is the path of devotion or *bhakti mārga*.

Again if one approaches the ideal, constantly meditating on it to the exclusion of everything else, as a result, the knowledge of the ideal becomes well-established in the mind and one is led to *Vijñāna*, or realization of the ideal. This is called the *sāṅkhya mārga*, or the *jñāna mārga*, the path of inquiry.

In all these cases the mind becomes ripe and refined with practice and the mind itself gradually leads an aspirant to the final goal of freedom. In traditional interpretation of Vedānta we do not come across

the method of synthesis. For instance the dualists do not ever compromise with the non-dualists; devotees do not think very highly of knowledge, and work is always disparaged by them as having nothing to do with devotion or knowledge. But the *Gita* uses the language of synthesis and wonderfully bridges the gaps between all the four approaches, and the secular and the spiritual. Even though this attempt at bridging has been made in almost every chapter of the *Gita*, the ninth chapter appears to be the most illustrative, in the sense that here there is discussion of many ideas such as: the idea of creation, the idea of the all-pervasiveness of God, the nature of God, the necessary qualifications for attaining liberation, sin and virtue, incarnation, the glory of devotion, and other important points. All are taken up and answered with amazing clarity.

The ninth chapter occupies the middle stage of the *Gita*. From this position it takes up the threads of previous discussions in earlier chapters and begins fresh ones to be concluded in the later chapters, until there comes the grand finale of harmony in the eighteenth chapter. Many of the famous quotations taken from the *Gita* are from this chapter. It is said in the traditional circles that Śāṅkara finished all that he had to say in his commentary on the *Gita* in the second chapter. But still he refers to the last śloka in the eleventh chapter as being the essence of the *Gita*. We find that the last śloka in the ninth chapter also coming very near this description.

It is in the ninth chapter that we get the unqualified declaration by the Lord spelt in unmistakable terms that everyone, irrespective of birth, attainments, caste, creed or sex is entitled to the Highest, viz. *mukti*. All one has to do is to develop one-pointed devotion to God and He takes entire care

of the welfare of such devotee. In the language of Sri Ramakrishna, what is needed is *vyākulatā*, or intense yearning.

Sri Krishna calls for a bold faith and loud assertion by Arjuna that a devotee of the Lord will never perish. Even though such assurances and proclamations given by Sri Krishna elsewhere have drawn the attention of teachers of *bhakti* more pointedly, Sridhara Swami, whose gloss on the *Gita* is famed for its lucidity, is particularly attracted to *this* assurance given by the Lord in chapter nine. Our mind is delighted at Sri Krishna's broadcasting an idea called 'the royal secret' in the second śloka. Such is the glory of devotion! Many such gems of ideas are scattered all over the ninth chapter, making its name, 'The Path of the Royal Knowledge and Royal Secret' the most meaningful. We presently take up some of these ideas for a short discussion.

The chapter opens with the promise that the Lord is going to say something secret. It becomes secret because it is sacred. This secret when unravelled will confer liberation. It is not a mere theoretical knowledge, but something to be practically realized. It is directly experienced and easy to practise and yields imperishable results. According to Śāṅkara, this chapter deals with knowledge which is superior to meditation mentioned in the previous chapter. According to Sridhara Swami, it is the glory of God and devotion to him that is sung here. Madhusudana Saraswati feels that knowledge is given in the language of devotion. This shows that the secret given out here is interpreted as knowledge by some, and as devotion by others. It makes no difference so far as the practice is concerned.

Fundamental to all the paths is *śraddhā*, or faith. People fail or do not get full results because they lack faith. The idea of *māyā*, an understanding of which helps us

develop discrimination, is introduced here in the form of a puzzle. There are two ślokas which speak in apparently contradictory terms. In one of the ślokas the Lord says that all beings are in Him, but He is not in them. (IX.4) In the next He says that beings are not in Him. (IX.5) This is the mystery. The mystery is explained as follows : an embodied being is attached to his body by reason of his ego-consciousness, whereas the Lord is free from it. That is, the Lord is in all beings because He is all-pervading, but not in them because He is not attached to them-unlike a *jīva*, or bound soul.

The creation emanates from the Lord and in the end again merges into Him. He is not the agent of creation. His presence is sufficient for *Prakṛti* to bring out creation. His transcendental nature is the object of meditation for *jñānis*, whereas His immanent aspect is for the *bhaktas*. These acts of creation and dissolution of the universe do not bind the Lord. Beings are helpless and are bound by their nature, and therefore are born again and again. It is an indication of the merciful nature of the Lord that He creates this universe, thereby providing us with an environment to work out our inherent tendencies. Swami Vivekananda says that this world is like a gymnasium and we come to the world to work, gain experience, educate ourselves and attain knowledge. God is not involved in the creation, whereas the *jīvas* are. *Bhakti* makes the *jīvas* seek the Lord in creation, whereas *jñāna* makes them seek Him outside of it. Either way we cannot be attached to His creation.

The Lord fully knows about His creation. To teach us we require some one who knows. The Lord himself comes down in the form of a human being, but endowed with all super-human excellences. He inspires and

liberates the virtuous. It is only the foolish who mistake His divine incarnation as an ordinary human birth, not recognizing His transcendental nature. Recognizing the Supreme Being in His human form is the hallmark of spiritual wisdom. It is difficult to recognize and understand fully the life and work of an incarnation of God. One who recognizes it becomes liberated. People endowed with divine nature alone can do that. Others belittle the significance of the life of an incarnation.

One must learn to see and recognize the Lord who is one without a second in all His manifestations. He is the Goal and fruit of all actions, the Master, the eternal witness, the ultimate Abode of all created beings, the sole Refuge, and the unfailing friend. He is both the manifested and unmanifested. One should always think of Him with a devoted resolute mind, sing His glories, and surrender oneself to Him. The ślokas which deal with the above aspects are in mellifluous language which captures the mind of a devotee.

People are generally interested in quick results. They therefore worship His manifestations and get the desired results. There are a few who worship the Lord Himself and are liberated. People who follow the Vedic (ritualistic) injunctions worship the limited manifestations and go to higher worlds. But they are subjected to birth and death. To know, while worshipping the manifestations, that they are only the manifestations of the one Supreme Being is knowledge ; not to know this is ignorance.

Now a strange economic proposition is given by Sri Krishna. Rituals prescribed in the Vedas are elaborate and require a great deal of materials and money for their performance. The fruit is commensurate with the size of the sacrifice. Any sacrifice yields

limited results, and no sacrifice can confer immortality. Worshipping the Lord with devotion alone confers immortality. The Lord gives the devotees the right knowledge. To please Him it is not necessary to perform costly rituals. He is pleased with whatever a sincere devotee offers and He confers on His devotee the Highest. Love alone attracts Him and not wealth, pomp or show. We are advised to practise this loving devotion in everything we do, offering all the fruits of action to Him. This is the spirit of *karma yoga*. Traditionally *karma* means ritualistic work or duty prescribed by the scriptures. In this chapter the scope of *karma* covers everything that we do. We should think of Him even while doing our worldly actions. He should be made to participate in everything we do and as a logical consequence accept the fruits thereof. Love binds the Lord to the devotee, and the difference between the secular and the spiritual vanishes. After all, it is His creation. Where is the World? It is He who appears as the world!

We may get into doubt if the Lord is partial to His devotees. Sridhara Swami explains such is not the case. Whoever seeks Him gets His grace, just as whoever seeks fire gets the heat.

Now comes a very important declaration of the Lord which is not so forcefully spoken anywhere else. We always hear about the virtuous men of right conduct. What about men of wrong conduct? Can they become devotees? Is right conduct a *sine qua non* or *desideratum* for being a devotee? Does devotion depend only on birth or conduct? The question has not been dealt with satisfactorily by the commentators and it is difficult to harmonize the idea of wrong conduct with devotion, in the traditional interpretation of scriptures. Among the devotees we do come across some who did

not bother about the prohibitions and injunctions of the *śāstras*. In the language of Sri Ramakrishna, their devotion takes them by a storm as it were. They do not know anything other than the Lord. The Lord assures them too that they may attain to the Highest. Examples of those who might not be fit for the study of the scriptures, or those of sinful birth, or those whose professions distract their minds, can get inspiration from the lives of such devotees described in mythology or recorded history. Sri Krishna casts His net very wide! He does not want to leave out anyone who is sincerely devoted to Him. He makes Arjuna proclaim to the world with a loud beat of drums that the devotees of God never perish. This is the special Gospel of Sri Krishna to the world at large, particularly to the modern world of sceptics and cynics. The modern world seems to be more in need of the message of the chapter on the 'Royal Secret'. The message is so relevant to intellectuals who are feverishly engaged in acrimonious, never-ending debates about God and pious life.

Examples of devotees who were born in lower castes and whose conduct was not thought highly of by society are many: Guha and Sabari in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, Vilva-mangal and Kannappa Nayanar in recorded history, Samadhi mentioned in the *Chandī*, the Gopis of the *Bhāgavata*, and so on. If these humble devotees could attain *mukti*, where is the doubt about pious devotees of noble birth? Chapter nine of the *Gita* concludes by exhorting the devotee to fix his mind on the Lord, be devoted to Him alone, worship Him, and surrender everything to Him. What is there to expect in this world? It is not permanent and cannot give eternal happiness. Take refuge in the Lord. That is the only way. This is the real synthesis of the Yogas.

Tyagaraja—The Saint-Musician

KAMALA S. JAYA RAO

For the saint who realized the immanence and transcendence of the Divine Lord through Nāḍopāsanā, (music) occupied a very exalted place. Dr. Kamala S. Jaya Rao, M.D., of Hyderabad, writes a warm appreciation of the divinely Inspired poet and musician.

Sri Ramakrishna describes three types of joy: the joy of worldly pleasures (*viśaya-ānanda*), the joy of worship (*bhajan-ānanda*) and the joy of God-realization (*Brahmānanda*). The Indian poetical genius used music, which belongs to the second type, as a potent means to attain to the third and the highest type of bliss. The spiritual map of India is thickly dotted with musicians and music composers, who used their art and talent not only for individual personal salvation, but broadcast it to help the less fortunate move Godward.

Classical music is today broadly classified into the Hindustani school developed mainly in the northern part of India, and Carnatic music, developed in the South. Three great composers, known as the Vaggeyakāra-s, contributed immensely to the development of the latter school. The three—Muthuswami Dikshitar, Shyama Sastri, and Tyagaraja, are reverentially referred to as the musical trinity. The last named, Tyagaraja, was a great devotee honoured as a saint.

Tyagaraja's *Iṣṭa* (Chosen Deity) was Sri Rama, and the majority of his compositions (called *kīrtana*-s) are addressed to the Supreme as Rama. The Saint also sang in praise of Siva, the Divine Mother and other deities as well. Tyagaraja wrote his wonderfully melodious songs in the Telugu language, but richly embellished them with Sanskrit. Then his use of alliteration, rhetoric and similes are such that the *kīrtana*-s beggar translation. The epithets he used to describe

Sri Rama form a choice treasury for etymologists. To quote from *The Cultural Heritage of India*,¹ "His songs...gave an added prestige to Telugu as a mellifluous speech and sweet language for music." He expressed in his compositions the truths of the Gītā and Upaniṣads in simple and appealing language.

Tyagaraja composed his songs extempore during periods of ecstasy and inspiration and did not write them down. It is due to the immense credit of his devoted disciples that the large number of *kīrtanas*—nearly eight hundred—are available to us today. Scholarly treatises and books have been written on Tyagaraja and his musical compositions. The present essay is a humble effort to introduce this great saint-musician to a wider readership.

In Tiruvarur, on the bank of the Kaveri river near Tanjavur (Tamil Nadu), Tyagaraja was born in 1759. Tiruvarur was renowned for its spirituality, its saints and its musicians. Not far away, Tiruvaïyyaru, where he spent much of his life, was also a sacred place known for its spiritual atmosphere and for its being a centre of culture. Realizing the great spiritual potency in this region, Tyagaraja in many of his songs praises its glory and the glory of the river Kaveri. Tyagaraja was married but belonged to that

1. *The Cultural Heritage of India* (Calcutta: Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Gol Park, 1970).

galaxy of luminaries who are a standing testimony to Sri Ramakrishna's assurance that householders too can realize God. Sri Ramakrishna stressed the importance of holy company, and Tyagaraja too sang in like vein—

*What if you are householders (Sāṁsārins) ?
If you believe in the Lord, the enemy of
Kamsa (Kāmsāri), refrain from harming
others and delight in the company of the
holy ;
If you drive away all evil thoughts and
convert your spouse and children into
servants of God ;
If you join the holy company of devotees,
surrender all pleasures unto Sri Hari and
sing His praises—
What if you are householders ?*

Being a householder himself, Tyagaraja had his share of worldly trials and tribulations. He referred in many of his *kīrtanas* to the troubles and derision he was subjected to by his brother and other kith and kin. He also reminded the Lord of how He had protected Sugriva and Vibhīṣana from their cruel brothers. His true longing, however, was for deliverance from the ocean of worldliness, and prayed for divine beatitude. In a song addressed to the Divine Mother, he prays—

*O Dharmambika, Do not treat me as a
stranger! I have now become your own.
Do not entangle me in the meshes of your
Māyā.*

*Dharmambika, Come to my rescue as a
mother rushes to succour her crying infant.
O Mother! Do not treat my wail as mere
din and noise.*

To devotees of Sri Ramakrishna this may bring before their eyes the picture of the Divine Mother putting down the rice-pot from the hearth and rushing to lift up her beloved child.

Tyagaraja was not wealthy, he voluntarily embraced poverty and he was the embodiment of his own name, Tyagaraja—the prince of renouncers. It is said that the local ruler, Raja Śaṛabhoji of Tanjavur, desired that Tyagaraja should dedicate his poetical works to himself, and sing his praise, in return for which he promised immense riches. Outraged, Tyagaraja sang:

*O my mind! Tell me truly, is wealth
(nidhi) superior or Rama's proximity
(sannidhi) superior ?
Are curds, butter and milk delicious, or
is the nectar of meditation and worship
(dhyāna bhajana sudhā rasa) of Dāsarathi
delicious ?
Is flattery of men in pursuance of self-
interest (mamatā bandhana yuta narastuti)
better or is the kīrtana of the Lord, adored
by Tyagaraja better ?*

The saint's elder brother, Japyesa, an ordinary householder, was extremely annoyed at what he considered Tyagaraja's foolish refusal to go to the royal court, sing the praise of mortal man, and accept the royal gift. It is said that in a fit of anger he stole the image of Rama which Tyagaraja worshipped and adored, and threw it into the river Kaveri. One can imagine the anguish the Saint experienced at this loss and his sorrow poured forth in song—

*I wonder where he has hid himself, O
Mind ; when will He (Rama) have the
compassion to reveal Himself ?*

*Unable to tolerate the ill-treatment suffered
by Prahlada at the hands of his father,
Kanaka Kasyapa, did he not hide Himself
in a pillar ?*

*Unable to bear seeing Sugriva being
pummeled by his brother, Vali, did He
not hide Himself behind a palm-tree ?*

*To forgive the evil deeds of the past lives,
to crush the six enemies within, and to
protect those who have steady devotion*

to Him, and to protect Tyagaraja, I wonder where He has hid Himself this time!

Needless to say, Rama revealed to His devotee where He was hidden, and Tyagaraja recovered the Idol, his sole wealth in this world.

Impermanence of the World

Living in the world, Tyagaraja was acutely aware of the follies of ordinary people, their obsession with 'woman and gold', their blissful ignorance of the certainty of death and their foolish attempts to seek permanence in this earthly existence. He cautioned the mind to beware of the female body—

O Mind! Do not be deceived by the body. It is but a repository of filth, excreta, and blood.

Sing paeons to the Lord, and do not be deceived by the female body.

Tyagaraja's caution fell on deaf ears and he lamented—

O beautiful Sri Rama! Why is it that men in this Kaliyuga do not realize that this body is impermanent?

They build stone houses, have attendants, overfeed themselves and hoard money; They earn wealth through cheating and run after women like dogs, thus ensuring repeated births for themselves in the world. Why do not they realize their afflictions are the result of their own actions? Why don't they worship the Lord of the Universe, Whom Tyagaraja adores, and realize that material wealth will vanish like the morning dew?

Referring to Sri Rama in pure idiomatic Telugu as 'the Beautiful', Tyagaraja indicates that, that is the only beauty to be adored. The truth appears otherwise to the worldly-minded, to whom this world itself is a paradise—

Without any fear of the other world (paraloka bhayam), people get bound by worldliness (bhava paśa baddhulu). They think they alone possess pretty women, children, find raiment and dwelling places, and consider this world to be a paradise.

A time comes in the life of everyone when he awakens to his sorrow, the impermanence of everything he considered everlasting. Tyagaraja could not repose a silent spectator. He advised a way to put an end to *bhava baddhulu*, worldly entanglement, which was a treatment as well as preventative for this disease of spiritual ignorance—

Even the best of men cannot obtain Knowledge without the help of a guru. To remove this dense and hard malady of the heart, a sadguru—true teacher is needed.

When the body, children, spouse, wealth and relatives appear, only to be lost, that distress can be removed by a kind guru alone; he frees the mind from attachments by the medicine of spiritual instruction. That Guru is the One who cares for Tyagaraja.

A potent way of using the 'medicine of spiritual instruction' is to pray incessantly. "Let me assure you that man can realize the Inner Self through sincere prayer," said Sri Ramakrishna, "but to the extent that he has the desire to enjoy worldly objects his vision becomes obstructed" Tyagaraja fervently prayed for the removal of obstructions—

O Tirupati Venkata Ramana, O Supreme Being, will you not remove the curtain of envy (matsara) which is within me, and which keeps me out of reach of the four puruṣārthās!

I am like a hungry fish lured by the bait of worldliness. The curtain of enticements covers the light of Knowledge. Like a fly it troubles one taking his food.

It is the snare trapping the deer unawares. I have been following You faithfully; kindly hasten to remove this curtain of arrogance (mada) and envy from within me.

An interesting anecdote is related in connection with the above *kīrtana*. It is said that when Tyagaraja arrived at the famous temple of Venkateśwara at Tirupati, it was time for food-offering to the Deity and the curtain was drawn across. Pained and disappointed at not being able to see the Deity, Tyagaraja burst forth in allegorical song, depicting how it is not any physical barrier, but the six enemies within that obstruct man's vision of Truth.

God does not appear easily even before a devotee of Tyagaraja's eminence. The Saint prays plaintively for the removal of this grief of his—

Lord, reposing on the milk-ocean (Kṣīra-sagara-śayana), should you subject me to such worry?...Chanting of Your holy name brings redemption; do have mercy on me!

By referring to Rama as the Lord reposing on the milk-ocean, Tyagaraja avers that Rama is Viṣṇu Himself, the Supreme Godhead. In many *kīrtanas* he refers to Purāṇic *itihāsa* (history) when the Lord came to the rescue of Prahlada, Draupadi and the elephant-king Gajendra, and who is ever-ready and alert to save the devotee. And, here is a gentle rebuke. Now the Lord reposes quietly on the milk-ocean, oblivious of this devotee on the earth, and subjects him to the pain of not granting His vision. The bitter reprimand is found in many of the *kīrtanas*, and who but a true devotee can criticize the Lord?

Of what avail is it to be called the Servant of Your servants? O Lord, You have no love for the poor and the lowly; With no compassion whatever You declare that my

troubles are the result of my own karma. You lack self-indignation. Your sweet words are false And yet, they say You protected your devotees!

Rama, the virtuous, whose arrows and words, according to Tyagaraja are never taken back, now the same Lord resorts to lies!

What pleasure do you derive by telling lies?

Time passes on Kalyana Rama, but a man's words remain.

Many a time You assured me You were my mother and my father, and said there was no cause for fear (yet You do not protect me).

What pleasure do you derive, O Lord, by telling lies?

The Lover's quarrel with the Lord was not unique with Tyagaraja, nor is it shocking. It forms a charming chapter in the life of almost every true devotee of God and reveals the passionately intimate relationship the devotee establishes with his Chosen Deity. In such intimacy, even the devotee's chiding the Lord is a form of praise, for it brings out the true qualities of the Supreme. In Ramprasad, Mira, Purandar Das, and Tulasi one finds same loving, gentle criticism of the Lord. With the same deep intensity of feeling Tyagaraja questioned Siva—

Who on earth has called You 'the Destroyer of Distress' (Pranartti-hara) and named You Śaṅkara, 'the One Who Brings Peace'? I have meditated on You, Lord, and bowed down to You.

The admission that he meditated on Śaṅkara reveals that Tyagaraja was not a bigoted follower of one Deity only of the Hindu trinity. He made no distinction between Viṣṇu and Siva. Siva, renowned for His being easily pleased, however, seems

not to have been satisfied by the Devotee's prostrations. There was despondency. Did the Lord consider Tyagaraja an unnecessary burden?—

Raghurama, You who are the Universe Itself, is it a burden for You to protect me, a single soul?

Sri Vāsudeva! You revealed that you carry all the worlds in Your stomach....Is it a burden to protect me?

In this *kirtana*, Tyagaraja recalls the beautiful episode wherein the Baby Krishna graciously bestowed the vision of His Universal Form on Mother Yaśoda. He revealed to her that indeed the entire universe exists within Himself; He has become all that exists. In a mood of pique and pathos, therefore, Tyagaraja asks the Lord how then could a single soul like himself prove a burden? He indicates that Rama and Krishna are not really different. He could not really bring himself to blame the Lord for negligence. The poet in him concluded that it must be the Lord's attendants who were non-cooperative—

Sri Raghuvāra! Do you not understand my distress at not seeing Your ever-blissful smiling face?

Does Khagaraja (the king of birds) not obey Your command to come quickly, or is it that he thinks earth is too far from heaven (and does not wish to travel so far)?

O Paramatma, Ruler of the Universe, to whom else can I appeal? I cannot tolerate it any more, please do come and bless me!

The devotee is, however, not totally disheartened. He is fully aware that the Lord has His own plans. While Sri Ramakrishna considered himself a chariot driven by the Divine Mother according to Her wish, Tyagaraja likened himself to a puppet in Rama's hands and surrendered himself wholly to Him—

Why should I worry, O Sri Ramachandra, Prince of Saketa, Protector of devotees (sadbhakta mandāra)?

You hold the puppet strings in Your hands and conduct the show with unerring rhythm, and the whole world showers encomiums on you!

Humour

Not all the *kirtanas* of Tyagaraja are plaintive appeals. There is a thin vein of humour running through some of them, revealing his intimate relationship with the Lord. That intimacy entitled him to some freedom and friendly witticisms. Here is an admonition and a friendly tip too, to Sri Rama—

O Rama, this is not proper on Your part. I am much upset. I worship You with devotion, but Your conduct is otherwise. You are Wonderful Bliss-Condensed (Adbhutananda-ghana) and immanent in the Creation. Am I not Yours, Sita-Rama? If you bless me, will you not earn immense merit (punya)?

Tyagaraja knew well that he was not the only one thus deceived by the Lord; he knew that no seeker ever had his prayers fully granted—

Whoever enjoyed pleasures by simply asking for them, O Primordial Being (Adi-mūlam)?

When Sita desired to roam in sylvan surroundings, You banished her to the forest. When Surpanakha desired You, You lopped off her nose!

When sage Narada wanted to know Your Maya, You turned him into a woman. O Rama! O Resider of Saketa! I know Your tricks; Your mystery stands revealed. You may protect us, out of compassion, or then again, You may not!

(Continued on page 392)

Leaky Boats and Lordly Liner

N. HARIHARAN

Giving up all his pretensions of knowledge and wealth, a man may become a seeker of God and enter the realm of Supreme Truth—writes forcefully Sri Hariharan of Madurai, Tamil Nadu.

KNOWLEDGE and Wealth are titanic twin powers, mighty in their workings and unfailing in their conquests. While Knowledge dazzles and overawes by its iridescent majesty, subdues all dissent and establishes its undisputed sway, Wealth lures, corrupts and enslaves the world. In the face of vast sweep and concentration of knowledge, thick encrustations of ignorance have to melt away. Knowledge, thus, is ever victorious in its onward march—albeit, for its every new advance, new areas of darkness also loom on the unknown horizon. By contrast, Wealth is an insidious force of hypnotic allurements that saps the grimmest resolve and crumbles the most adamant resistance. Wealth is so imperious in its subtle claim on the mind that it simply buys off the entire world with the least ado. Like twin colossuses, Knowledge and Wealth rove invincible over the world and exercise their powerful dominion.

And yet, there is one realm which is entirely immune from either the pompous pretensions of Knowledge or the subtle blandishments of Wealth. The mystic secrecy of Brahman, the Absolute, defies all rational thought and intellectual comprehension. The Transcendental Truth is forever—immobile, austere, and silent, and would not yield its esoteric import to the subtlest enticements of wealth.

This spiritual rule—of Brahman's stern inaccessibility to the demands of Knowledge and Wealth—is embedded in the corpus of Upaniṣadic lore. According to the *Chāndogya*

Upaniṣad, Narada once approached the sage Sanatkumara and requested him to show the path to spiritual knowledge. Sanatkumara said, "Let me first know what you have already learnt. I shall tell you of things that are beyond them"—"*Yad vettha tena mopasīda, tatasta ūrdhvam vakṣyāmi.*" (VII 1. 2.) Narada then said, "Sir, I have learnt the *R̥g-Veda*, *Yajur-Veda*, *Sāma-Veda* and *Atharva-Veda*, the fourth. History and mythology which are the fifth *Veda*; grammar, the rites for the manes, mathematics, astronomy, astrology, the science of augury, jugglery, logic, ethics, the lore of the gods, science of animals, science of war, and the subjects of fine arts—I know all these. But, Sir, I feel I merely know the mantras or potent words, but I do not know the Ātman or the soul, or spirit of things. I have heard from men like you that he who knows the Ātman goes beyond all sorrow (*tarati śokam ātma-vid iti*) (VII. 1.3.) Sir, I am full of sorrow and grief and remorse. I hope and believe that you will be able to lead me to the other shore of the sea of sorrow with the help of the raft of knowledge of the Self." The sage replied, "Dear Narada, all that you have known is but mere name and verbiage, mere words. (*Yad vai kincaitad adhyagiṣṭāḥ nāma eva tat*) (VII. 1.3.) You can, by your present knowledge, achieve only what words can achieve and nothing more." Narada's knowledge here represents the entire body of possible empirical knowledge and his confession of spiritual nescience shows that discursive knowledge, even in its encyclopaedic sweep, is powerless to comprehend the Absolute.

Taittiriya Upaniṣad echoes the same view in the succinct and memorable phrase "...that Brahman from which all speech, with the mind, turns away unable to reach..."—"*Yataḥ vacaḥ nivartante aprāpya manasā saha.*" Thus, according to scriptural testimony, the entire gamut of mundane lore is classified as *aparā-vidyā*, inferior knowledge, and is to be distinguished from *parā-vidyā*—Transcendental Wisdom—which is intuitive, supra-sensuous and supra-rational. In fact, the massive collection of empirical knowledge is a load and liability on the mind of a seeker of Absolute Truth, as it accentuates the mind's natural proclivity to fancy, distortion, and false projections. Self-experience sternly demands surcease of all mentations. The richer our empirical knowledge, the more violent our mentations and the poorer are we in spirit. This is what the *Śruti* means when it pithily says, "He who does not conceive it—to him it is known. He who conceives it—he does not really know. It is not really understood by those who understand it; it is really understood by those who do not understand it. (*Yasyāmatam tasya matam matam yasya na veda soḥ avijñātām vijñātām vijñātām avijñātām*) *Kenopaniṣad*, II. 3.

As if he were paraphrasing the *Śruti*, Sri Ramakrishna tersely avers; "*Grantha-s* are *granthi-s*"—"Books are so many knots." Again, illustrating the barrenness of book-learning, the Master says, "The kite and the vulture soar high up in the air, but all the time their eyes remain fixed on charnel-houses in search of putrid carcasses; similarly the minds of the so-called learned men are attached to the things of the world, to lust and wealth, in spite of their erudition in sacred lore, and hence they cannot attain true knowledge."¹

With the highest order of ability, intellect and empirical knowledge, Swami Vivekananda probed the mystery of Brahman, and said in his inimitable incisive way:

This is the whole history of man. Finer and finer becomes the veil, more and more of the light behind shines forth, for it is its nature to shine. It cannot be known; in vain we try to know it. Were it knowable, it would not be what it is, for it is the eternal subject. Knowledge is a limitation, knowledge is objectifying. He is the eternal subject of everything, the eternal witness in this universe, your own Self. Knowledge is, as it were, a lower step, a degeneration. We are the eternal subject already; how can we know it?²

Brahman is undifferentiated Pure Consciousness, the Supreme Light which illumines everything, including the act and fact of knowing. It is Pure Being wherein the triad of Knower, Knowledge and Known is immolated in the blaze of Unitary Consciousness. The act of knowing, in which subject-object relationship inheres, founders on the inexorable logic of Brahman being the Eternal Subject, and hence being ever unknowable. Intellection and ratiocination fail to lift the veil of the mystery of Brahman, the Pure Awareness.

The *Kaṭhopanishad* crisply puts it: "This Self cannot be gained by the *Veda*, nor by intellectual power, nor by much learning. He is to be gained only by the one whom He chooses. To such a one the Self reveals His own nature"—"*Nāyam ātmā pravaśanena labhya na medhayā, na bahunā śruteṇa: Yamevaiṣa vṛṇute, tena labhyas tasyaiṣa ātmā vivṛṇute tanūṃ svām,*" (I.2.23.) And the choice of the Self will not fall on

1. *Sayings of Sri Ramakrishna* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore,) p. 54.

2. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Caltutta: Advaita Ashram, 1989) Vol. II, p. 82.

any except that wise one, whose sole wealth consists in his possession of the supreme virtues, the four-fold norms (*Sādhana-catuṣṭaya*), viz. Discrimination (*Viveka*), Dispassion (*Vairāgya*), the Treasure of six virtues (*Ṣaṭ-sampatti*)—like mind-control (*Śama*), sense-control (*Dama*), self-withdrawal (*Uparati*), forbearance (*Titikṣā*), faith (*Śraddhā*), and tranquillity (*Samādhāna*)—and intense Yearning for Liberation (*Mumukṣutvam*).

Self-knowledge is equally beyond the vast ambit of Wealth. If it were not so, it would be nothing better than an article of commercial transaction. Self-knowledge is as far removed from opulence and its vulgar flaunts as it is from ostentatious learning. This spiritual dictum is graphically illustrated in the dialogue between Yājñavalkya and his wife Maitreyī that occurs in the *Bṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad*. Maitreyī pointedly asks her husband, "Sir, if indeed this whole earth full of wealth be mine, shall I be immortal through that?" "No," replies Yājñavalkya, "your life will be just like that of people who have plenty of things, but there is no hope of immortality through wealth."—"Amṛtatvasya tu nāśūsti vittenati." Material wealth cannot procure *Amṛtatvam*, which is only another name for Self-realization. The Nachiketa episode in *Kaṭhopaniṣad* dramatically exposes the utter impotency of splendrous wealth over the mind of Nachiketa who is established in longing to know the Truth (*Mumukṣutvam*). Far from being an aid to Self-realization, love of lucre and avaricious acquisition of it hamper spiritual growth by engendering such unspiritual qualities as greed, envy, covetousness, arrogance, fear and vulgar ostentation.

Mythology relates how, when Śiva (symbolising Brahman) stood as a blazing pillar of fire, Viṣṇu took the form of a boar and burrowed into the earth to find out the foot, while Brahmā assumed the form of a swan

and soared into the dizzy heights to discover the summit of the effulgent column. Both returned crestfallen, unable to measure the Blazing Mystery. Viṣṇu, the consort of Lakṣmi, the Goddess of Wealth, symbolises fabulous opulence. Brahmā, the consort of Saraswati, the Goddess of Learning, represents deep scholarship. Their failure to gauge the immensity of Śiva means, in effect, the utter incapacity of Wealth and Knowledge to probe the deep mystery of Brahman.

If we would cross the mighty ocean of *saṃsāra* and attain the spiritual Goal of human life, we would do well not to trust the "leaky boats" of Knowledge and Wealth.

How, then, are we to cross the ocean of transmigratory travails and reach the yonder shore of Self-experience? Is there any "liner", safe and secure, which can take us across to the *Summum Bonum*? Yes, there is a ship, and the *Gītā* indicates that reliable ship saying:

Tad viddhi praṇipātena paripraśnena sevayā/upadekṣyanti te jñānam jñāninas tattvadarsinaḥ (IV. 34).

"Learn That by humble reverence, by inquiry and by service. The men of wisdom who have seen the Truth will instruct thee in knowledge."

The triple factors—deep veneration, reverent inquiry and self-abnegating service, aid us in the envisioning of Truth. The Lord has placed the word *Paripraśna* (Spirit of inquiry) between the two words *Praṇipātena* (Humble prostration) and *Sevayā* (Service). The true seeker is not a mere intellectual acrobat, proud of his flair for reeling off strings of knotty questions to nonplus his Teacher. In place of pride, his heart should be filled with longing and earnest supplication to know the means to shake off spiritual bondage and gain saving wisdom. His questions should be marked

by utter humility, and as evidence of it he should prostrate himself before his Guru. After eliciting answers to his queries, the seeker should again engage himself in the service of the Guru lest he should fall a victim to the demon of spiritual arrogance — the arrogance born of consciousness of one's being an ardent spiritual seeker. Prostration, intelligent queries, and loving service, blend together to form an integral spiritual approach to gain spiritual vision. Humility, indeed, is the key to unlock the treasures of spiritual wisdom, and self-conceit is the deadly foe of Self-knowledge. To quote Dr. S. Radhakrishnan:

...But mere intellectual apprehension will not do. Intellect can only give fragmentary views, glimpses of the Beyond, but it does not give us the consciousness of the Beyond. We must open the whole of our inner being to establish personal contact. The disciple has to tread the interior path. The ultimate authority is the inner light which is not to be confused with the promptings of desire. By the quality of service and self-effacement, we knock down the obstructing prejudices and let the wisdom in us shine. Truth achieved is different from truth imparted. Ultimately, what is revealed in the scriptures (*Pratipata-śravaṇa*), what is thought out by the mind (*Paripraśna-manasa*) and what is realised by the spirit through service and meditation (*Sevā-nididhyāsana*), must agree. We must consort with the great minds of the past, reason about them and intuitively apprehend what is of enduring value in them.³

Upakosala and Satyakāma are two Upaniṣadic seers whose lives are a veritable

commentary on the *Gītā* text: "Only he who is full of faith will attain Knowledge" — "*Śraddhāvān labhate jñānam*." Upakosala, the ardent disciple did not lose his faith in his guru Satyakāma, in spite of the fact that the latter completely neglected him for twelve years, and taught his other disciples. Upakosala was instead entrusted with the task of tending the fires and he discharged his duties faithfully, quite unmindful of his preceptor's studied indifference to him. Even the intercession of the guru's wife on his behalf failed to make the guru relent. He continued to ignore Upakosala. Once when Satyakāma was away, the triple fires tended by Upakosala so conscientiously became pleased with him and they imparted to him the theoretical knowledge of *Brahmavidyā*. They, however, instructed Upakosala that the practical techniques of transmuting the philosophy of *Brahmavidyā* into living experience would be taught by his guru. When Satyakāma came back he observed the brahmic effulgence on the disciple's face and was only pleased to know that the fires had imparted spiritual knowledge to him. The guru then completed the instruction. Later Upakosala himself became a great Seer. Upakosala's spiritual awakening came about neither by scholarship nor by affluence, for he had none of these. His vision of Truth was solely due to his faith in his guru and to his own spiritual integrity, his infinite patience, his sincerity in discharging his duties, his self-effacement and spirit of service.

Similar was the story of Satyakāma. The great seer, Haridrumata Gautama had been much impressed by the adherence to truth displayed by Satyakāma. So much so, that he promptly agreed to be Satyakāma's guru. But the preceptor, instead of imparting spiritual instruction to his disciple, entrusted four hundred head of weak and thin cattle to his care and asked him to tend them. The disciple willingly took the emaciated cattle

3. *The Bhagavad Gita*, Trans. by Dr. S. Radhakrishnan (Madras: Blackie & Son, Ltd.), Chapter IV, pp. 169-70.

and vowed to himself that he would not return again to the guru until the cattle multiplied to a thousand. After a long time they attained a thousand and Satyakāma returned. As he was driving the great herd home, he was instructed by a bull, a fire, a swan and a diver-bird. Reaching the hermitage of the guru, he shone with such spiritual radiance that the guru could not help exclaiming, "O good-looking one! You shine verily like a knower of Brahman. Who may it be that instructed you?" Satyakāma confirmed saying, "Someones other than human beings. But it is you, Revered Sir, who should instruct me for fulfilling my wish. For it has been certainly heard by me from venerable ones like you that knowledge acquired from the teachers alone surely becomes the best."

Satyakāma's spiritual illumination was due

to his unswerving devotion to truth, his deep veneration for and unshakable faith in his guru, his sincerity in the discharge of his duties, his infinite love and compassion for the dumb cattle—which love and compassion ripened into an all-embracing love and unitive vision—, his keen spiritual sensitivity, capable of picking up and assimilating spiritual truths, even from flora and fauna, and his rock-like firm faith in the excellence of instruction given by his guru. He was utterly simple and innocent, and had the strength neither of pelf nor of pedantry.

Verily, wealth and knowledge are "leaky boats", unsafe, unprofitable and untrustworthy. The sublime spiritual virtues which Satyakāma and Upakosala exemplified constitute the "lordly liner" that takes us safely to the port of Plenary Wisdom and Experience.

TYAGARAJA—THE SAINT-MUSICIAN

(Continued from page 387)

Even if the Lord does not come to protect His devotee, the latter has a potent weapon to ward off all fear, including the fear of death—

Seeing all good men (sujana) sing bhajans unceasingly, Yama (the King of Death) is worried.

Seeing his emissaries, equipped with

tridents and ropes, he is worried that their enthusiasm has been curbed!

(Yama thought)—Those who roam about without the knowledge of the true path would at least come to him, but they too have resorted to the singing of Tyagaraja's kirtanas!

(to be concluded)

Dance of Siva

JAYPAL JEE

Siva-Tāṇḍava Stotra, or the Dance of Siva, by Rāvaṇa, is rendered into English verse by Sri Jaypal Jee of Bhuvaneswar, Orissa.

WHOSE neck is shrouded by the forest of matted hair,
Floweth through which the holy water of the Ganga,
The chiefs of serpents whereupon bloom like flowers
And dangle from the matted crown like so many wreaths ;

The terrible sound of whose tabor sends a thrill through the spheres,
That smouldering in the ocean bed with fire flung from craters,
The earth trembles and lightnings flash with rhythmic roars,
May Siva's cosmic dance spread auspiciousness all over!

In the cauldron of whose matted hair in swirls
The Ganga gusheth forth unconcerned in torrents,
And dangling like a thousand-and-one charming rivulets
On the forehead of whom glittereth a fire with glow
That burnt to ashes the lord of passion (Cupid) like straw,
Whose eyes are lotus-like, brow long-arched and wide
And on forehead the crescent Moon ; with reverence to Him I bow! 2

Being charmed beholding the brilliance of Siva's crown
Shining on the crest of the daughter of mountains
Brightening all the spheres with flashes all 'round',
Whose mind in the bliss of ecstasy remained ;

The dart of the glance of whose eyes could destroy
The insurmountable dangers in a fraction of a moment,
May my mind be absorbed in the contemplation of
That Lord, who hath His Being, without length or breadth. 3

The shining pearls on the hoods of serpents
From within matted hair shed a reddish-brown light
On the charming countenance of the beauties of the quarters
And invest all around with a saffron colour bright ;

Wearing skin of elephant, stained reddish brown
From ichor of its body, my heart who beguiles.
May I find bliss in that wonderful form of the Lord,
Of prime five elements in His dance so wild! 4

Whose lotus feet bear the dust of pollen
 Of the flowers from heads of Indra and gods of heaven ;
 The king of serpents glides wreath-like on Siva's crest
 And coileth round His matted hair, in its quest for rest ;
 The crescent Moon shineth on the forehead of whom,
 May He bestow on me that wealth of wisdom eternal! 5

From the altar of whose forehead fire blazed forth,
 Sparks of which like a beam burnt to ashes
 Kandarpa, who aimed five shafts in his wrath
 At Him who beareth the Ganga on His crest ;

And the crest shone with nectar-like lustre
 May that Lord, on whose chest a wreath
 Of skulls lies, tufts of matted locks adorning,
 With growing wealth and prosperity bless us all! 6

In the terrible fire on the expanse of whose forehead
 That hissed out incessant fiery flames in succession
 And in that conflagration with fury who obliterated
 The wielder of five shafts, the lord of passion ;

He who while flying on the wings of imagination
 Drew artful designs, for delighting Himself,
 On the crest of the breast of the daughter of mountains ;
 At the feet of that Triple-eyed One may my mind take rest! 7

Like a new cloud mass which halts in its flight
 Fuming in vain, striving for a door of escape,
 Like the dense deep dark of a new Moon night
 Who beareth mark of a blue-black hue upon the neck ;

On the crest of whom descends the Ganga from heaven,
 Wearing reddish skin of the elephant who sustains
 The crescent Moon upon His tangled hair open.
 May He bless me with new prosperity and gain! 8

Bearing the hue of blossomed blue lotuses
 And the glow of azure firmament of heaven,
 Like the stem of the mushroom along whose neck
 Containing a line of stain of charming dark brown ;

To that slayer of Kama, the slayer of Tripura,
 The Remover of rebirth, Destroyer of Daksha's ill-omened sacrifice,
 Destroyer of the elephant, Andhaka, and nescience,
 In reverence. His holy Lotus Feet I adore! 9

From the ineffable beauty in the face of Parvati,
Mingled the artful spikes of Kadamba, flowed a stream
Of nectar, the sweetness of which Siva sipped
Like a bee and remained in a state of bliss sublime :

To that Slayer of Kama, the Slayer of Tripura,
The Remover of rebirth, ill-intended sacrifice Destroyer,
Of elephant, Andhaka and nescience,
In reverence, His holy Lotus Feet I adore!

10

Victory unto Him in whose tufts the serpent
Whiffs the flickering embers, causing his head to sway
While in rhythm sounds the Mridanga reaching its climax ;
Lord Siva dancing terribly, but spreading Auspiciousness.

11

Who is alike to rocky bed or soft down of cotton,
To serpent or necklace, charming diamond or stone,
To friend or foe, a spade of grass or dame,
And on pauper or monarch looks with equal eye.
Who taketh pairs of opposites as of one value,
To that great Sada-Siva I adore and salute!

12

Sitting calm inside an unfrequented resort
On the bank of the Ganga I shall cogitate
The Moon-crested Lord, leaving all wicked thoughts
Joining my hands in prayer to my head,
The sacred name of Siva, with eyes full of tears,
When shall I cogitate and be happy forever!

13

This hymn of Shankara as sung herein above
Is famed as the Ace of all the best prayers,
The man who shall cogitate, recite or describe it
Shall attain purity of body and mind then and there.
He shall achieve devotion to Hara, the Guru Eternal,
To no evil path shall then his mind wander,
When cogitating the auspicious virtues of Shankara
Who destroys the delusions of all living beings!

14

At the end of worship in the evening—who recites
This prayer of Ravana, extolling the virtues of the Lord,
His wealth, including chariots, elephants and steeds,
By the grace of Shambhu shall be stable forever!

15

REVIEWS & NOTICES

THE ESSENTIAL TEACHINGS OF BUDDHISM edited by Kerry Brown and Joanne O'Brien ; published by Rider ; 1989 ; pp. 302 ; price: £ 8.95.

"Third in a series of readers which is intended to offer an introductory exploration of the great religious texts of the world," this is just not a compilation of Buddhist thought. Such impersonal, amorphous anthologies abound. What is significant about the present volume is that it is meant to be of practical help in its overall orientations. As such it is designed to appeal both to those who seek a practical manual for quiet contemplation and those who "wish to open themselves to the insights which" Buddhist teachings offer.

What is offered is comprehensive and represents all the extant Buddhist traditions: Theravada (Thailand and Sri Lanka) and Mahayana with its vast range from India, Tibet, China, Korea, Japan to the various modes of Zen. Thus, it is a rich harvest of the basic traditions of Buddhism embodied in "the word of the Buddha Himself and the word of saints, sages, and scholars."

In spite of the rich material offered, with all "its richness and variety" and its "varying forms", the reader, as the editors rightly say, is saved any possible bewilderment thereof because what is presented here is the core, "the continuing transmission of Buddha dharma". Presented by practising members of these "living traditions" this book of daily readings from the sacred texts of Buddhism is thus a practical manual.

Appearing, as it does, under the Rider Imprint which is a guarantee, as it were, of both meticulous editing and pragmatic orientations,—specially in religious/spiritual areas—*The Essential Teachings of Buddhism* is highly recommended to all those given to the diligent cultivation of the seed of quiet, contemplative awareness.

Dr. M. Sivaramkrishna,

ASTROLOGY AND THE HOAX OF SCIENTIFIC TEMPER, EDITOR: GAYATHRI

DEVI VASUDEV. Published by DR. RAMAN Foundation 'SRI RAJESWARI' 115/1 Sheshadripuram, Bangalore 560 020. pp. 348, Rs. 54.

The book edited by Smt. Gayathri Devi Vasudev is a fitting and spirited defence of the Divining Science—'Pratyaksha Phala Darpana', 'Vedanga', 'Vedaschakshu'—Astrology against the attacks and criticisms of the prejudiced and pseudo-rationalists. These people mainly play to the galleries, awfully ignorant of the depths of this great, useful and lofty shastra.

The book exposes the hoax of the so-called 'Scientific Temper' coloured by sophistry and hypocrisy. Neither a degree in science nor earning a little fame automatically endows one with true scientific temper which is characterized by openness and receptiveness to Truth. Orthodox Science is as harmful as orthodox religion.

This book is unique in trying to establish authentically that Vedanga Jyotisha, which deals with correlation between celestial phenomena and terrestrial events, is at least six thousand years old, and existed much before the origin of the Greek and Chaldean Systems. The book exposes the unreliability of computer forecasts and much commercialized sun-sign astrology and marriage matching. It also points out that a huge amount of money is spent on space, medicine, and meteorology despite their frequent failures. A nation can also benefit from the predictions made by Astrology. "Why single out Astrology," very pertinently asks Gayathri Devi Vasudev, from receiving some financial help and also getting research facilities?

The article of Shri K. N. Rao, "The Proof of the Pudding", a well-documented and rational paper, is an excellent objective assessment of success and failure of predictions by a well-known, honest researcher in Mundane Astrology.

The book contains some interesting self-explanatory anecdotes by Dr. Bhise, Paramahansa Yogananda, Paul Brunton,

Sri Aurobindo, and others. Bhrigu Nadi Reading of Ramana Maharshi's horoscope reveals the amazing predictive power of Astrology.

'Consult in private and condemn in public' has become the fashion of the day to preserve the modernity image of the higher-ups.

Carl Jung, the great psychiatrist, who studied horoscopes to understand the personality structures of patients, wisely remarked: "Western civilization, by ignoring astrology, gains little and may be losing much."

In itself, quantification is no magic key. But still, a lot of research with documentation and statistics is necessary to increase the validity, credibility and utility of this great science.

Prof. H. S. Venkata Rao

THE WANDERING MONK, Published by Vivekananda Kendra Prakashan, Kanya Kumari, 1989.

Vivekananda Kendra Prakashan has brought out a separate volume on the theme of 'the wandering monk'. Its articles have been contributed by monks of the Ramakrishna Order and by other persons well-versed in the life and message of Swami Vivekananda. The volume describes in thorough detail the itinerant life of the great Swami from the time he came out of the Baranagore Math in 1880 up to 1893.

This volume on Swamiji's wanderings is a significant contribution because it gives the reader graphic idea of the experiences which led Swami Vivekananda to conceive the way to carry out the world mission entrusted to him by Sri Ramakrishna. Reading through the book one gets a clear perception of Swamiji's dynamic personality, prophetic visions, and above all, his compassion for suffering humanity.

The volume utilizes attractive pictures and photographs to illustrate this rich and colourful period of Swami Vivekananda's life, weaving in details of Swamiji's visits to

different states, his meetings with contemporaries, and the development of his grasp over prevalent social, economic and political problems of the era. The printing and get-up are very good. Educational institutions should possess such volumes.

Dr. Chetana Mandavia

ASPECTS OF INDIAN PSYCHOLOGY, by DINESH CHANDRA BHATTACHARYA SHASTRI. Published by Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Narendrapur, 24 Parganas (S). West Bengal. 222 pages, Rs. 50/-.

There is a general misconception that Psychology in the sense of 'Science of the Mind' has not received systematic treatment in Indian Philosophy. That this is only a superficial reading, and that the truth of the matter is otherwise, is amply proved by the author in this able treatise on the subject. Maybe psychology as an independent science has not been so regarded in Indian thought, but as a significant part of Yoga, Meditational techniques, Ayurveda, the science of life, and Philosophy of Knowledge and Emotions, the subject has received ample attention. The author cites passages from the Vedic texts and the Upanishads, testifying to the importance the ancient seers give to an understanding of the mind and its functions. Is the mind a separate entity or part of the *antahkarana*? The *Brihadāranyaka Upaniṣad* is clear: "There is a factor or entity whose connection and non-connection with the sense organs accounts for the origination and non-origination of cognition, in spite of the soul, sense organs, and objects being present there." (page 110).

Raising the question whether the mind is only a subtle sense organ or a formation of the consciousness, the writer cites the view of the Advaita-Tantra that "...Manas is not material but is active consciousness itself." (page 16) Discussion on the different functions of the mind, the extent to which the 'Unconscious' is part of the activity of the mind, the psychology of education in the Indian tradition, and above all, the ramifications of the Yoga Psychology of Patañjali is learned and thorough. Fully documented and authentic in exposition, the book serves

both the needs of scholars in the universities and the general reader interested in the subject.

Sri M. P. Pandit

THE BHĀGAVAD GITA, by O.P. Ghai. Published by Institute of Personal Development, 1-10, New Park Extension, New Delhi, 110-016, 1990. 116 pages, Rs. 75/-.

The subject matter of the book is not the whole of the *Gītā*, but its summary and essence in simple English, chapter by chapter. The author, O.P. Ghai, admits in the preface that he attempted a summarised rendering in simple English for ...'laymen, young people and foreigners' who are not conversant with the cultural heritage of India. The author has been successful in presenting the story of the *Mahabharata* at the background of the philosophical and spiritual discussions between Sri Krishna and Arjuna.

In describing the story the chapters of the *Gītā* are presented with their special bearings, with only those ślokas which convey the content of the whole. Each chapter is given a caption and the selected ślokas are carefully arranged according to the standard English translations, of the *Gītā* by at least thirty four different authors mentioned in the Bibliography. The book, though abridged, is infused with the spirit of the entire *Gītā*. Paper, printing, binding—the overall get-up of the book is excellent, but the price seems a bit high for the personal library of a middle class reader who is likely to be tempted to possess a copy.

Dr. Satchidananda Dhar

SPIRITUAL PERFECTION by Anthony Elenjmittam. Aquinas Publications, Bombay, 1989. 216 pages.

Rev. Anthony, the author, has attempted to establish the fundamental unity in the conception of spiritual perfection in all major religions of the world. A widely read scholar and active preacher of spiritual values, the author has liberally highlighted the wisdom of the Vedas, the Upaniṣads, Buddhist texts, the Bible and other classics of antiquity.

The views expressed in the book, in most cases are founded on the Vedāntic ideas of 'unity in diversity' and these the author supports with passages from other scriptures and sayings of the enlightened ones. Views of the author are catholic and universal in nature. That 'Man is divinity' and that 'man is God' and his perfection is to be one with God, are assertions of the Vedānta and are the keynote of the book. There are thirteen chapters explaining the nature of human perfection and the ways and means leading to perfection—without which, according to the author, "...our social, economic and political problems will never be solved".

The author deserves credit and praise for asserting the need for spiritual values and the realization of one's innate divinity in this modern age of mere sensory existence.

Dr. Satchidananda Dhar

KANAKADHARA STOTRA of Śrī Śaṅkarācārya, by S. Kameswaran (Author-Publisher) 7 Vivek, Sector 4, Chheda Nagar, Chembur, Bombay 400-089. Rs. 9.00.

There is always an undercurrent of *Jñāna* in the devotional outpourings of Acharya Shankara. And the present Hymn of seventeen verses lauding the Divine Mother as *Lakṣmī*, the bountiful Goddess of Wealth, is no exception. In this translation Sri Kameswaran has spared no pains in bringing out the subtle nuances of each word in his elaborate notes following fluent renderings in English. He draws upon the lore of other scriptures, the *Puranas* and modern classics (in English) to explain in detail the purport of the verses which are framed in a number of rich metres. The meaning of *katākṣa* (side-glance) the role of *Śhākambhari*, the presiding deity of the plant-world, the apposite reference to *Gajalakṣmī* (verse 16) for meditational purposes—these and other relevant topics are dwelt upon with precision. The author rightly states that the occasion for the prayer is found in a legend about the needs of an indigent family, but the overtones extend to the perennial human situation and the human need of the gifts of divine Grace in spiritual life.

In a note on *Aparokṣānubhūti*, Sri Kameswaran writes: "As there is a sub-conscious state, so there is a superconscious state. When the mind bounces beyond the confines of the conscious plane, it reaches a state where there is no perceiver, no perception and nothing to be perceived; where it comes face to face with the Supreme Spirit; nay it merges itself totally in It." (page 19).

The text in Nagari script with transliteration, word-for-word meaning and translation into English verse with copious notes make this Edition both educative and elevating.

Sri M. P. Pandit

PRINCIPAL SYMBOLS OF WORLD RELIGIONS, by Swami Harshananda. Published by The Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Madras 600 004, 1989. 47 pages, Rs. 4.00.

In our daily experience and especially when visiting places of worship, we come across varieties of symbols representing different concepts and deities. These symbols often stand for profound and meaningful concepts of philosophy and religion, but may not be clear to us on first sight. The present book under review fulfils a great need by giving some explanations.

Various symbols in the world religions like Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, Shintoism, Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Zoroastrianism and Taoism are illustrated with fine drawings in this booklet. For each symbol the author has given a description and interpretation of its different parts, discussed its origin, historical significance and meaning. Apart from these, Swami Harshanandaji has not missed giving in brief the essentials of each religion and the basic truths taught by them. Thus the reader gets

a clear insight into the ideas suggested by each symbol.

On the whole, this small book is charming and enlightening. Its printing and get-up are very good.

Dr. Chetana Mandavia

SOME SELECTIONS FROM THE SCRIPTURES OF WORLD RELIGIONS, by SWAMI HARSHANANDA. Published by The Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Madras, 1989. 60 pages, Rs. 6.00.

The frequent occurrence of communal clashes, displays of religious fanaticism, and sectarianism have their origin in lack of understanding of the teachings of religion. So a right knowledge of fundamentals of religion is necessary to ward off narrowness, bigotry and fanaticism. The present scholarly book by Swami Harshanandaji brings out the basic ideas of world religions. Original verses from the scriptures of Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, Zoroastrianism, Christianity and Islam are translated into lucid English. The passages are selected to give the quintessential ideas of each religion. Preceding each discussion, the author presents an introductory note and the dominant theme. His approach is useful, especially to one who is reading the scriptures for the first time. The key to transliteration and pronunciation given at the beginning will also be very helpful to many.

It strikes the reader that the ethical, moral and spiritual principles taught by each religion are the same; following which humanity should be able to live in peace and harmony. This collection will be a most useful publication. Its study generates in the mind respect for the great religions and kindles a spark of interest to know more about them.

Dr. Chetana Mandavia

PRACTICAL SPIRITUALITY

In this ever-changing evanescent world, union coexists with separation, prosperity with adversity, happiness with misery, fortune with misfortune, enjoyment with disease, property with strife. Each follows the other like a shadow that passes. Knowing this and experiencing this, why do men still get entangled in such a world through the lure of phantom happiness? The immediacy of the pleasure derived from the enjoyment of sense-objects is the undoing of man. Even a grain of nominal pleasure makes one forget the pains of miseries suffered a million times!

One can escape from the clutches of misery only if one always thinks over the ultimate result that his acts may bring. Who can remove the misery of one who fails to learn even by repeated experience? Who can awaken one who is feigning sleep? The true fruition of human life is reached by taking the steps necessary to avoid coming back to this world and undergoing endless sufferings, by being born again and again.

No work can ever be done and nothing can ever be successfully accomplished, if one sits idle and waits for what fate or luck may bring. Moreover, such an attitude makes a man unmanly and *Tāmasic* (inert) and debases him altogether. Men commit mistakes or fail because of their own faults, and they put the whole blame on evil fate or luck or stars! A person trips or slips through his own carelessness, but blames the ground! All achievement usually depends upon one's own effort. If there be anything called fate which is felt to be an obstacle to the realisation of the aim of life, it has to be overcome by rousing with self-effort the innate strength that lies dormant within everyone. Only then are you a Man. If you do that, you will find that fate also will be favourable

to you. If fate alone were all-powerful, there could be no such things as talking of right or wrong, virtue or vice, or the power of the Spirit. Men are not stocks and stones. "Fate alone is causing me to do everything, I am not responsible for my acts; I am being helplessly driven along by it."—If this be the mental attitude, no man can ever rise, or hope to reach *Mukti*, or salvation. Remember, it is nothing but degrading for a man to think himself weak and at the mercy of unseen Powers; it pushes him down more and more into the mire. When some work has to be done, you should be full of activity, setting yourself to it with all your heart and soul. Do not pay the slightest heed to obstacles and hindrances, if they turn up, however insuperable they may seem to be. You will then find that those very obstacles and hindrances will actually help you in some way or other. Is it always possible to have a favourable atmosphere after one's own heart? The person who thinks that he will devote himself to the worship of God with a carefree mind, after having completed all his duties and settled all his family affairs satisfactorily, fares like the fool who goes to bathe in the sea, but frightened by its dreadful waves, thinks he will go into the water only after the waves have subsided a little and the sea becomes calm. That never comes about, even if he sits on the beach till the last day of his life. There will always be waves in the sea. One should boldly jump into the sea, bathe fighting with the waves, and get through with it. In the same way, in this sea of the world, one must call on God, do spiritual practices and worship Him, fighting all along with the waves.

Swami Virajananda
from *Paramartha Prasanga*



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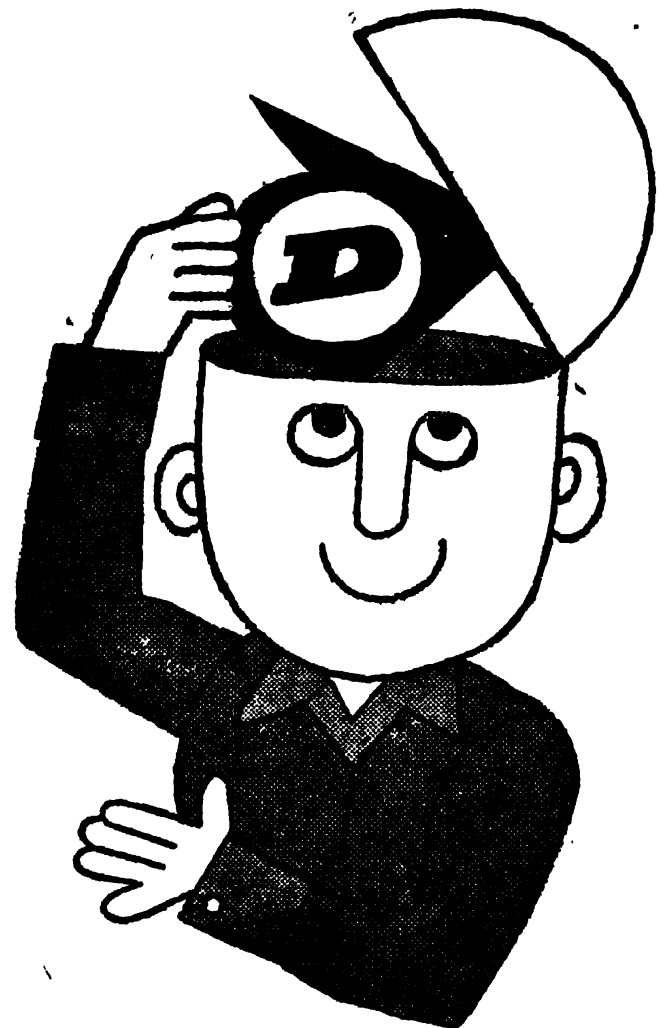
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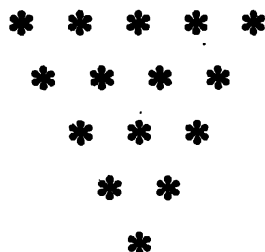
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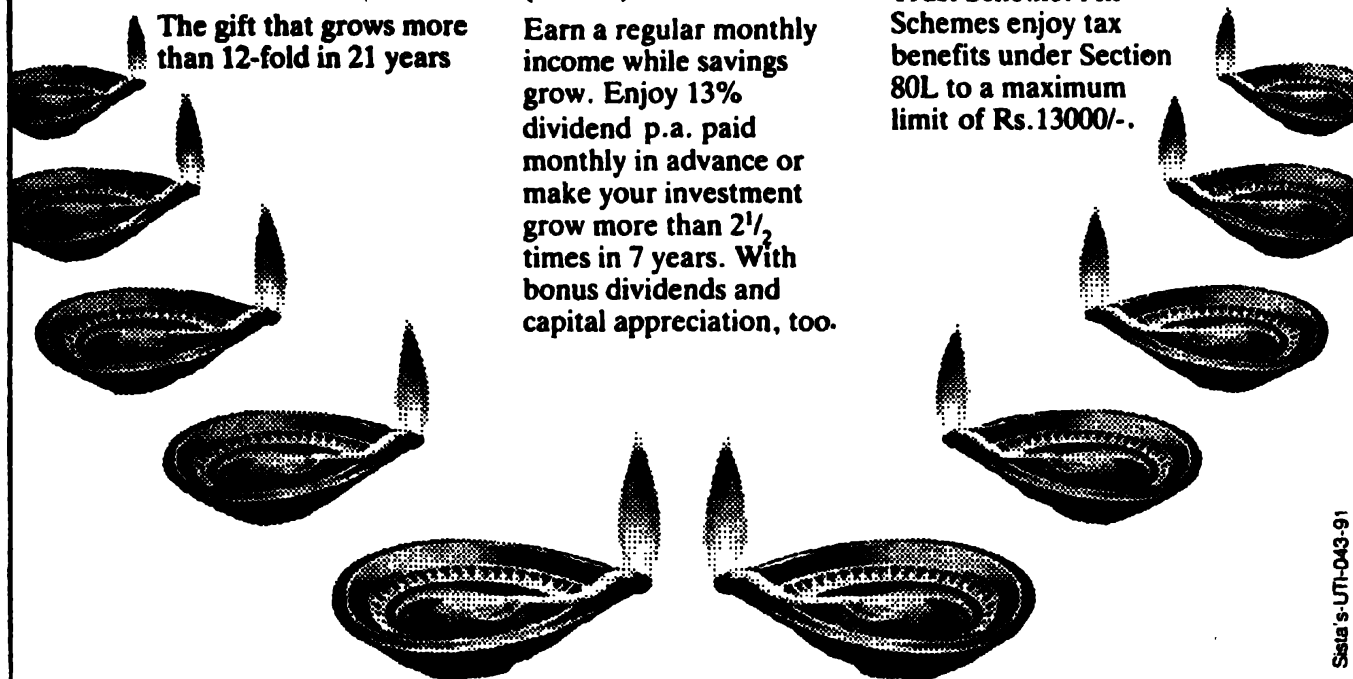
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—Gita, VIII. 61

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—Swami Vivekananda

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Prabuddha Bharata

Arise! Awake!
And stop not till the Goal is reached.

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The Divine Message

In Praise of Jagaddhātrī—The Divine Mother

आधारभूते चाधेये ष्टिरूपे धुरन्धरे ।
ध्रुवे ध्रुवपदे धीरे जगद्धात्रि नमोऽस्तुते ॥

O Mother, Thou art the container of all and again the things contained. Thou art the Supporter of all, and the Bearer of the burden of all. Thou art the Eternal Being, the Eternal Abode and Tranquillity embodied. O Thou Protectress of the universe, salutations to Thee.

जयदे जगदानन्दे जगदेक प्रपूजिते ।
जय सर्वगते दुर्गे जगद्धात्रि नमोऽस्तुते ॥

Thou art the giver of success, the Bliss of the world, the one object of its adoration. Glory unto Thee. Thou art all-pervading and rescuest men from difficulty. O Thou Protectress of the universe, salutations to Thee.

तीर्थयज्ञ तपोदान योगसारे जगन्मयि ।
त्वमेव सर्वं सर्वस्थे जगद्धात्रि नमोऽस्तुते ॥

Thou art the goal of all pilgrimages and sacrifice, penance, charity and spiritual practice. Thou art everything, and Thou dost permeate everything. O Thou Protectress of the universe, salutations to Thee.

दयारूपे दयादृष्टे दयाद्रो दुःखमोचिनि ।
सर्वापत्तारिके दुर्गे जगद्धात्रि नमोऽस्तुते ॥

Thou art the embodiment of mercy, Thy very look showers mercy. Thy heart is softened by mercy and Thou art the Dispeller of misery. Thou art the Saviour of all from every harm ; Thou art yet hard to approach. O Thou Protectress of the universe, salutations to Thee.

Jagaddhātrī Stava

Mother—The Source of Vak

THE striking and dominant refrain of Indian philosophy or religion is essentially spiritual. It may, to the superficial mind, appear purely speculative, but as one dives into its deeper dimensions, he discovers the supreme reality, the fountain of spiritual bliss. Everything is explained logically and bears imprint of utmost rationality. Supra-rational knowledge perceived intuitively by the great souls, descends on earth-consciousness through thoughts. These unspoken thoughts find an eloquent expression through the medium of words, but, are never found transgressing the frames of rationality and comprehensibility. All intuitive revelations can be tested on the anvil of experimental investigation. Nothing is taken for granted or believed on hearsay. Each person has to become a living laboratory to try and test these truths and incorporate them into daily life.

The Hindu religion is not a creation of a single mind, nor is it exclusive like Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Its flexibility and fluidity have universal sweep and appeal. The sages declare that the direct and intuitive perception of Reality is within the reach of all, if only they have the will to have it. "We have seen it; you can also see it," say the Upaniṣadic Seers. "This experience," writes Dr. Radhakrishnan, "is not confined to any race or climate. Whenever the soul comes to itself, in any land or any racial boundaries, whenever it centres down in its inward deeps, whenever it sensitively responds to the currents of deeper life that surround it, it

finds its true nature and lives joyously, thrillingly, in the life of the spirit."¹

Mind and matter are traced back to the ground of formless consciousness, or eternal quiescence. This impersonal Absolute is looked upon as personal God—Śiva in Śaiva āgamas (sacred texts), or as the Divine Mother in Śākta literature. Both sects have been immensely popular, and in recent times the worship of Mother has received tremendous impetus and inspiration from Sri Ramakrishna. Two important texts, the *Devī Māhātmyam*, which forms the part of the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*, and the *Lalitā Sahasranāma*, which occurs in the second part of the *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa*, have been most important for the worshippers of the Devī. Devotees recite every day from either one or the other. The sublime poetry in these texts soars to great heights; the breathtaking vision of manifest and unmanifest aspects of the Goddess leaves one awe-struck. The description of the glory and grandeur of the Mother Divine plunges one into raptures. The Sanskrit words become charged and send a thrill in the heart. For nearly two millenniums these sacred books have been exercising their extraordinary spiritual influence over the hearts of aspirants. The sphere of their charm has leapt over national boundaries and attracted the attention of earnest souls the world over.

What is *Vāk*? *Vāk*, as we generally know it, is speech, the spoken word or language

1. Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, *Religion and Society* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1947) pp. 47-48.

which people speak in different parts of the world. Most of us think there is only one kind of speech, the uttered, audible gross speech with which we communicate. Has speech, as we know it, only one form? That assumption is erroneous, says the *Iṅg Veda* (I. 164.45).

*Catvāri vākparimitā padāni tāni vidu
brāhmaṇā ye manīṣiṇaḥ
Guhā trīṇi nihitā nenguyanti
turīyam vāco manuṣyā vadanṭi*

“Four are the stages of speech. Brāhmaṇas who are wise know them; three of them are hidden and motionless; only in the fourth stage, the gross speech is spoken by people.” Spoken words are the gross form and behind it are the subtle, and subtler invisible forms. Mystics and yogis in the suprasensuous state comprehend it in its totality. For an ordinary mind, which is solely occupied with the objects of the world and gross sounds of the spoken word, *Vāk* in its totality is almost inconceivable. It is the Universal Mother Herself who resides in all beings as the mysterious Power of *Vāk* (Speech). It is through Her grace that the mystique of *Vāk* is revealed. One who realizes it becomes a *Vāk-siddha*—whatever he utters becomes true, and matter obeys his command.

There are four kinds of speech: *Parā*, *Paśyantī*, *Madhyamā* and *Vaikharī*. The descent of *Vāk* is from *Parā*—supreme Speech through *Paśyantī*—imperceptible, and *Madhyamā*—not clearly perceptible (intermediate), to the *Vaikharī*—gross speech.

Divine Mother is described in the *Devī Māhātmyam* as *Śabdātmikā*—She is the soul of *Śabda-Brahman*—unmanifested sound. This is further elucidated in the *Lalitā Sahasranāma*. It says: *Parāyai namaḥ* (366)—Salutations to Her who is transcendent word; *Paśyantaī namaḥ* (368)—Salutations to Her who is called *Paśyantī*

(Seeing), as She perceives everything in Herself, without any instrument; *Madhyamāyai namaḥ* (370)—Salutations to Her called *Madhyamā*, which is not clearly perceptible: *Vaikharī rupāyai namaḥ* (371)—Salutations to Her called *Vaikharī*, the spoken speech in the gross form. She, therefore, is addressed as the Source of four-fold speech—*Parā*, *Paśyantī*, *Madhyamā* and *Vaikharī*. The first three, being very subtle are not easily known; the last, uttered and audible speech, is known to all.

The etymological meaning of the word *Vāk* is “to speak”. It also means both voice and the word uttered by the voice. *Vāk*, therefore, conveys the sense of *śabda* or word. *Parā Vāk* is the transcendent word or the unmanifested sound. This ‘word’ exists intuitively in God as cosmic ideation (*Śrīṭi-kalpanā*) before the unfoldment of the physical universe or projection. The ‘word’ is the creative power of God, or it is His *Māyāśakti*. This is a postulate recurring in many ancient religions. The Greek word ‘Logos’ means thought, and that which indicates the object of thought is the word. There was in the beginning an undifferentiated state (*Brahman*), and from that rises ‘Logos’ or thought or *śabda Brahman* which creates this physical universe. Thought is an unmanifest primal mental image which produces the physical image as it is conceived. The ‘word’ or ‘Logos’ used by Hebrews, Greeks, and Christians is the *Māyāśakti* of the Brahman or the Universal Mother. Divine Mother is present potentially in Brahman, and as *śakti* or power. She issues forth Herself from Him.

“*Prajāpatir vai idam āsīt, tasya vāg dvitīya āsīt*”—“In the beginning was Brahman (Formless Consciousness); with Brahman was *Vāk* (word). This supreme power, or *Vāk*, evolves Herself into this manifold universe of animate and inanimate objects. It is She who has become all. There exists,

therefore, nothing outside Her. "The process of creation, preservation and destruction that is going on ceaselessly is due to *Śakti*, the Power of God. "This Primal Power and the Brahman are one and the same,"² said Sri Ramakrishna. He explained in simple terms: "What is beyond speech and mind is born in the flesh, assuming various forms and engaging in various activities."³ To the question why She manifests Herself as this universe, the answer is, it is Her spontaneous desire, and no motive can be attributed to it.

In the beginning there existed nothing except the Cosmic Intelligence, or Undivided Consciousness. This state is called Cosmic Sleep, or the causal State. Consciousness is also called *Parā Vāk* (Supreme Speech). In this state consciousness is not aware of itself. Awakening from its causal state, it becomes aware of itself, i.e. self-awareness is there. In this state of self-awareness it 'sees' or creatively ideates the universe. This 'seeing' is known as the *Paśyanī Vāk*. What the consciousness sees are the impressions carried over from the previous universe, which entered into its causal state on the previous dissolution. After dissolution the universe or gross matter goes back to its causal state.

With the awakening of cosmic consciousness, the subtle impressions too, arise in it. In the *Paśyanī* state there is no actual split in consciousness because it sees itself. In the next stage the consciousness becomes aware not only of itself, but of the subtle impressions that are present in it. It is both subject and object, for it has not yet projected the universe. Though in this state there is subject and object duality, but that is within the consciousness and not without. This is the state of cosmic dream or *Madhyamā Vāk*. In the next stage the impressions carried over in the causal state

from the previous universe become materialized, and the physical universe comes into existence. The division between perceiving subject and perceived object becomes distinct and clear. This is cosmic waking stage, also called *Vaikhari Vāk*. In this awakened state people express themselves in vocal speech. In *Vaikhari* speech, words denote name (*nāma*) of the multiplicity of objects (*rūpa*).

Explaining this ceaseless play of projection and dissolution, or evolution and involution, Swami Vivekananda says :

The beginning was, therefore, intelligence. At the beginning that intelligence becomes involved, and in the end that intelligence gets evolved. The sum total of the intelligence displayed in the universe must, therefore, be the involved intelligence unfolding itself. This universal intelligence is what we call God. Call it by any other name, it is absolutely certain in the beginning there is that infinite cosmic intelligence. This cosmic intelligence gets involved, and it manifests, evolves itself, until it becomes the perfect man, the "Christ-man", the "Buddha-man". Then it goes back to its source.⁴

Cosmic consciousness ideates and out of that creative ideation the universe is projected. There is only consciousness, but through the veil of time, space, causation it appears as physical matter at one end. There is one stream. If one goes upstream one sees the limitless, timeless true nature of it, while the journey downstream shows the manifest physical side. The new findings of modern science have given the resonance to the ancient truth. Elaborating it, Swamiji said,

We now see that all the various forms of cosmic energy, such as matter, thought

2. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, 1985) p. 365.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 366.

4. *Vivekananda, Complete Works* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989) Vol 2, p. 210.

force, intelligence and so forth, are simply the manifestations of that cosmic intelligence, or as we shall call it henceforth, the Supreme Lord.⁵

“Mind and Matter are different vibrations or ripples in the same pond.” Writes Michael Talbot in his book, *Mysticism and New Physics*. *Parāśakti* or *Parā Vāk* is that infinite consciousness.

Macrocosm is reflected in microcosm. What is true there is also true here. Individual life, therefore, mirrors the cosmic process. Vivekananda had this highest realization of Truth under the peepul tree at Kakrighat near Almora. The fragments of this transcendental experience he jotted down in a notebook:

The microcosm and the macrocosm are built on the same plan. Just as the individual soul is encased in the living body, so is the universal Soul in the Living Prakriti [Nature]—the objective universe. *Shivā* [i.e. *Kālī*] is embracing Shiva: this is not a fancy. This covering of the one [Soul] by the other [Nature] is analogous to the relation between an idea and the word expressing it: they are one and the same; and it is only by a mental abstraction that one can distinguish them. Thought is impossible without words. Therefore, in the beginning was the Word etc.

This dual aspect of the Universal Soul is eternal. So what we perceive or feel is this combination of the Eternally Formed and the Eternally Formless.⁶

On the microcosmic plane the four-forms of speech are identified with different states of an individual: *Parā* with the state of

Turiya, or impersonal consciousness; *Paśyanti* with deep sleep, or subconscious thought; *Madhyamā* with the dream state, or prior to the rise of the spoken word; and *Vaikhari*, with the waking state. *Turiya* is a non-dual state where only impersonal consciousness exists. Personal identification with body and mind are lost and along with it the existence of the world in *Turiya*, the higher state. From this formless state the mind descends to deep sleep state where the identification with body and mind takes place and thought is held in abeyance. This can be verified from the fact that though one is in deep sleep, whenever he is called by his name he wakes up immediately. When the mind stirs from deep sleep and enters into a dream state, the subject and object split becomes implicit. This state is *Madhyamā*, or the middle stage, because it lies in between sleep and waking. In dream, thought and speech are active but vocal sound is absent. The uttered and audible word manifests itself with full force in the waking state, expressing the thought. The duality between the seer and the seen are complete.

What happens in the macroscopic level, the same process repeats at the individual level. The difference lies in the fact that a person knows only three states—sleep, dream and waking, and has no experience of *Turiya*. In all these three involuntary states the sense that one is a psychosomatic being, with such and such relation to other persons, never vanishes. Through spiritual practice alone one experiences the higher state and frees himself from feeling that he is the pseudo-entity he thinks he is.

Sage Jñāneśwar, in his famous work *Amṛtānubhava*—“Experience of Immortality”, says that mere intellectual understanding that “*I am Brahman*” does not destroy four-forms of speech which are born out of ignorance. *Vāk* is the *Māyā Śakti* of the Divine Mother, which keeps every *jīva* in

5. Ibid. Vol 2, p. 211.

6. *The Life of Swami Vivekananda by His Eastern & Western Disciples*, (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1979) p. 250.

bondage. The “*I am Brahman*” intellectual knowledge does not release one from *Māyā* because still the pseudo-entity “I” is present, that exists separate from Brahman. Such knowledge based on words, though having its value, is incapable of destroying ignorance. Jñāneśwar therefore says that the ultimate knowledge of Reality comes about by the transcending of both conceptual knowledge and its inter-related opposite, conceptual ignorance. Real enlightenment occurs when conceptualization (the four kinds of speech) in any form, either subtle or gross, ceases. The sage further explains that when the individual gives up the “sense” that he is a limited person, the four kinds of speech which are like ornaments for the four types of consciousness, along with ignorance, get extinguished. He has redeemed himself of the debt of speech (*Vāca-ṛna-parihār*) by surrendering at the Feet of his Guru—the Absolute, writes he.

In the living body the *Parā* resides in the *Mūlādhāra* centre, at the base of the spinal column, in a state of motionlessness (*nispanda*). When it rises to the *Svādhiṣṭhana* centre, at the region of navel and upwards, it is joined with the general movement (*Sāmānyaspanḍa*). It is called *Pasyantī*. Again when it rises to the *Anāhata* centre, in the region of the heart, it unites itself with the determinative faculty (*Buddhi*) and becomes *Madhyamā*, with special movement (*Viśeṣaspanḍa*). When the same rises to the *Viśuddha* centre, in the region of the throat and vocal organs, as articulate sound with specific movement (*Spaṣṭatara*), it becomes *Vaikharī*.

In the cosmic evolution, the Divine Mother has four names. They are: *Śāntā* (*Aryaktā*), *Vāmā* (*Kārya Bindu*), *Jyeṣṭhā* (*Nāda*), and *Raudrī* (*Bija*). Or She is also called *Ambikā*,

Iccā, *Jñānā* and *Kriyā*. The evolution of that Supreme Power of the Divine Mother in the living body has four names: *Parā*, *Pasyantī*, *Madhyamā*, and *Vaikharī*. Therefore, the scriptures say when a spiritual aspirant realizes the Universal Mother, residing in the *Kuṇḍalinī* as *Parā Vāk*, he attains liberation. The *Yogakuṇḍali Upaniṣad* says:

That *Vāk* (Speech), which sprouts in *Parā*, gives forth leaves in *Pasyantī*, buds forth in *Madhyamā*, and blossoms in *Vaikharī*. By reversing the above order, sound is absorbed. Whosoever realizes the great Lord of Speech, the formless illuminating Self, is unaffected by any word, be it what it may.

To a question how does speech arise, Ramana Maharshi replied, “First there is abstract knowledge. Out of this arises the ego, which in turn gives rise to thought, and thought to the spoken word. So the word is the great-grandson of the original source. If the word can produce an effect, judge for yourself, how much more powerful must be the preaching through silence.”

Mother *Kālī*, naked and dark, adorned with the garland of severed heads, stands in the burning ground on the corpse-like body of *Śiva*. Tantra texts explain that the string of heads She wears is the garland of fifty letters (*Varṇamālā*) of Sanskrit. She slaughters—that is withdraws—all speech and its objects at the time of the dissolution of the universe. She is the ground from which they shoot forth at the time of creation, and are dissolved into Her infinite consciousness at the time of the Great Withdrawal or Cosmic *Pralaya*. She is beyond thought and speech and yet She is the Matrix of all thought and speech.

Ramakrishna Temple—Its Significance

SWAMI BHUTESHANANDA*

God is omnipresent. Yet, temples are built not to please Him, but for the convenience of devotees, to help them feel the living presence of the deity. The temples dedicated to Sri Ramakrishna represent the lofty ideals of the Master, and we must become worthy heirs to his bequest—graciously counsels Revered Maharaj, President of the Ramakrishna Math and the Ramakrishna Mission.

We believe in a God who is all-pervading. Nothing can limit His presence. Yet, we build houses for God. How can a house accommodate Him? However big the house may be, it will be too small to contain the presence of the Divine. Such houses of God or temples are built in different parts of India and elsewhere. And people have been offering their hearts' prayers to the Lord in these houses of God for centuries together.

God is everywhere, there is no doubt about that. But, if we go to search for Him everywhere, our minds will run about all around and will not remain concentrated at one point. We require a spot where we can try to collect our scattered minds and direct them towards God. That is why temples are necessary to provide us with such a congenial place. People go to temples with the sole aim of worshipping the Divine in an atmosphere charged with the living presence of God.

What Temples Stand For

A temple is not meant for the sake of God; it is for the convenience of the devotee. A devotee may concentrate his mind at a particular place for offering prayers to God. Every temple is such a place where we can pray to God and sing His glories with love

and devotion. Therefore the idea behind the temple is that the Lord may be worshipped in a concrete form there. In fact, it is built as a holy shrine of God where the devotees go and try to rid themselves of their lower worldly desires.

A temple stands for spiritual culture. It is a symbol in brick and mortar of the Divine form installed therein. Here people develop their spiritual lives and many indeed realize their divine nature also. If holy men live in these temples, they draw inspiration for themselves and also make the place more inspiring for others by their own holy and divine lives. Spirituality must be kept alive in these temples so that they can always remain a source of inspiration for others. Those who are holy make the places of pilgrimage holier by their presence, by their *sādhana*. Through the rituals performed in temples, the deity becomes a living presence. This is called the 'awakening of God'. This awakened presence of Divinity answers the earnest prayers of devotees.

Sincere devotees struggle to realize their divine nature in their heart of hearts. But, the Lord is more or less asleep as it were in most of us. Not having felt the joy of the eternal presence of God inside us, we do not feel interested in seeking God inside. Many a time we give up *sādhana*. After making some effort we give up and become preoccupied with the joys and sorrows of the world

*Based on a talk given by the Revered Swami at Amaravati on 25 March 1987.

and totally forget the Lord. To avoid this, we should go to temples, sit quietly there and try to cast aside our ego and listen to the message of the heart. We are sure to find that our preoccupations with the joys and sorrows of the world to be nothing in comparison to the eternal joy that is experienced in the presence of God. So, it is the presence of the Divine that is the most important factor and for that very purpose we need temples.

We should, however, remember that a temple is not a commercial place. A commercial place is where people come, offer things to the Lord and priests come forward to act as mediators to God and exploit the devotion of the people for their own gains. That is not the idea of a true temple. Let us beware of such deterioration of the ideal of the temple. The temple is a place where the devotee spends his time in humble prayer, *japa* and meditation. It is not for the manifestation of the ego of some rich man either. It may have been built out of the contribution from both rich and poor. A temple is always a place for devout worship.

Temples of Sri Ramakrishna

We are discussing here the significance of a Ramakrishna temple. Ramakrishna temple is a temple dedicated to Sri Ramakrishna. The Ramakrishna temple stands for the ideals that Sri Ramakrishna represented, the ideals that he has shown through his great life and teachings.

Apart from the ideals of renunciation and harmony of religions that Sri Ramakrishna represented, he wanted his disciples to be spiritual giants themselves and to demonstrate the highest goal of life for all. Not only that. He said later on that spirituality must not be for one's own enjoyment alone. One must live the spiritual life so that he may be a source of inspiration to others,

living for others' sake more than for one's own. Even spiritual life should be for the sake of others, as much as possible. Spiritual life should not be a selfish pursuit only for one's own salvation. It is good if one desires his own liberation, but that liberation will be impossible if he does not feel and work for the liberation of others as well. Sri Ramakrishna said that he would be born again and again until he could remove the miseries of humanity. Swami Vivekananda, his worthy disciple, said, "I do not want liberation until and unless every other soul is liberated."¹ This is the great ideal that Sri Ramakrishna bequeathed to his beloved disciple. And this same ideal has been handed down to us. The feeling that life is not for one's own sake alone, but for the sake of the whole world is the ideal that we learn from Sri Ramakrishna. Our life's aim will not be only to gain liberation, but the emancipation of the whole world from ignorance, the cause of bondage.

Sri Ramakrishna is now a 'great magnet'. Everywhere, people are being irresistibly drawn to the ideal of Sri Ramakrishna because Sri Ramakrishna came at a time when people were groping in darkness and needed something to hold on to in this life of misery, discord and painful existence. Sri Ramakrishna came at a time when we were feeling almost frustrated in our attempt at solving the problems of life. It is said in the scriptures that when the power of evil predominates and good forces become subservient to evil forces, God incarnates in human form,² so that He can give another lease of life to the spiritual heritage of the people. It was at such a time of degeneration of the moral and spiritual values that Sri Ramakrishna was born.

1. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989) Vol. 5, p. 137.

2. Cf. *The Bhagavad Gita*, 4:7.

Sri Ramakrishna symbolizes the highest ideal of spirituality that is possible for a human being. A living ideal was necessary and it found fulfilment in Sri Ramakrishna. Such an ideal is very much needed for the world of today. A temple dedicated to him means that the hearts of the devotees who will come to the temple will be dedicated to the ideals of Sri Ramakrishna. These ideals of Sri Ramakrishna are the perennial source of strength for the people of this age and also for those that will come later on. The temple dedicated to such an ideal shows the concentrated devotion of the devotees who built the temple for him.

What Such Temples Must Be

The temple dedicated to Sri Ramakrishna should be a place which will inspire the devotees with the ideals to which Sri Ramakrishna dedicated himself. The devotees should feel inspired for living a higher life in the holy presence of Sri Ramakrishna in such a temple. Sri Ramakrishna says that God especially manifests Himself in the hearts of the devotees.³ It is the sincere hearts of the devotees that are behind the building of God's temple. It is through their hearts' desire to have a temple built that will reflect their ideal that these temples come up. It is a matter of great inspiration when all devotees come together and collectively offer their prayers to Sri Ramakrishna. Such an occasion brings a spiritual charge in the atmosphere. It creates the atmosphere of the living presence of Sri Ramakrishna.

We have got temples all over India. Many of them are found to be utterly neglected. Perhaps these temples, though sources of inspiration for some time, were neglected when the spiritual tradition was lost. What is the use of having such dilapidated temples? This is what one has to guard oneself against. The temples dedicated to Sri Rama-

krishna must always remain places full of divine inspiration for all devotees wherever they may come from. They should feel there peace and joy in the holy presence of Sri Ramakrishna. The devotees of Sri Ramakrishna should have this one idea that every-day or as many days as it is possible for them, they should come to the temple and offer their prayers to the Lord either individually or collectively. Let the spirit be growing more and more forceful so that the inspiration will be irresistible. Every stone of the temple should be a source of inspiration for the devotees. That can be achieved only by the joint efforts of all sincere devotees.

Temples become famous because they are able to draw people towards them. And this is possible because of the holy traditions behind them. Here, in the Ramakrishna temple, we should see that people come with the sole idea of raising themselves up spiritually and filling their hearts with spiritual inspiration. Let there be devotees coming here with pious heart, with humility and with the idea of praying here, sit here in meditation and keep the place quiet and peaceful. People should come and sit in the temple and should be careful not to cause any inconvenience to other devotees who come there. Prayers should be offered without disturbing anybody and that is how people who come here can find peace they need, the peace that will draw them together and the peace that is born of love of God, or of an earnest desire for reaching the highest goal of life, namely God-realization. When we have love for God, it will manifest itself through our hearts being open to everybody, healing the miseries of all people, and trying to help them get rid of their evil tendencies. Sri Ramakrishna stood for that ideal.

May Sri Ramakrishna help us reach that ideal ourselves and may he make us fit instruments in his hand to bring about the great regeneration of the world which was the aim of his life.

3. Cf. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, 1985) p. 133.

The Indian Vision Of God as Mother

SWAMI RANGANATHANANDA

(Continued from the previous issue)

For many ills of our society, the great anodyne is "the pulse of the mother-heart." This all-embracing love, or spiritual nurturing is not exclusively feminine, but is the privilege of all human beings—writes Revered Swami Ranganathanandaji, Vice-President of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission.

7. Need for the Pulse of the Mother-heart in our Nation Today

I wish we realize this truth a little more in our own country. If any one of our state employees is posted to a far-away village for work, he or she will try to avoid it, will try to bring influence to get the posting cancelled, and if such avoidance is not possible, he or she will remain apathetic and shirk all responsibilities. Many of our Union and State Government employees are of this type. And the nation suffers. What is behind such attitudes and behaviour? No genuine love for the nation or the people, but only contraction into self-love. Millions of our educated people do not think much of what happens to the common people, or to their own society. But if they have that love and humanist concern they will take all such occasions as a challenge to serve their nation and its weaker sections. That will reveal the presence of this *mother-heart* in them even in a small measure. The pulse of that *mother-heart* is lacking in many of our people today. That *mother-heart*, as said earlier, is not confined to the feminine only, but is the prerogative also of the masculine, as much as that of the feminine. Genetic motherhood alone is exclusively a feminine privilege, but spiritual motherhood is the privilege of all humanity.

The *Devī Māhātmyam* gives us this universal dimension of the Divine *mother-heart* pulsing in various forms in the hearts of all

men and women. (V. 14-34) Verse thirty-three sings thus:

*Yā Devī sarva bhūteṣu
māṭṛ rūpeṇa saṁsthītā,
Namastasyai namastasyai
namastasyai namo namaḥ...*

"That *Devī*, who exists in all beings as mother, I salute Her again and again."

A father has the *mother-heart*; a mother has the *mother-heart*. But there is a speciality in its manifestation in women. That *mother-heart* in its universal dimension is the Divine Mother of the Universe. In spite of our annual noisy ritual worship of the Divine Mother, in our society in India, we lack the *mother-heart* in adequate measure. We have mothers, but even they lack that *mother's heart* in great measure. We become narrow; our hearts become contracted, said Swami Vivekananda, and he referred to our practice of untouchability, suppression of our common people, for centuries together, as a result of the lack of that *mother-heart*. There was only the brain, but not the heart. In many of our women the *mother-heart* became limited to mere genetic motherhood, and to the small genetically-related family group, which made our women (more than our men) greater supporters of untouchability, and the suppression of the common people. They manifested many other virtues and graces, but failed to manifest along with our men the spirituality of the *mother-heart*.

Every woman is privileged to become a genetic mother and a spiritual mother, and every man is privileged to become a spiritual mother.

Love and care and service outside one's genetic relationships alone shows the presence of this spiritual *mother-heart* in its true form, ever free and ever expanding. Sri Ramakrishna says: '*I and mine*' is *Māyā*; '*Thou and Thine*' is *Dayā*, compassion. This *māyā* is the *avidyā māyā*, referred to earlier, and this *Dayā* is the *Vidyā Māyā*. *Avidyā māyā* confines one's love and care to one's own genetically limited family. There is nothing spiritually significant in it; it is found in the animals also. But its absence will be disastrous for the species concerned. The human *mother-heart* can transcend that limitation and embrace in thought and action (according to one's capacity) all those who need and seek love and care; and that expansion of *mother-heart* will take in also all the sub-human species. According to one's capacity, though that capacity may be, and certainly is, limited, one's intention can be and must be wide—even in spite of the individuals grouping themselves into organizations. Swami Vivekananda often spoke of the heart-lessness of our upper classes and wanted us to utilize our worship of the Divine Mother, and all our *bhakti* tradition, to inspire our people with a *mother-heart*, so that we can take in love and care and serve the millions of our country's weaker sections. They belong to us; we belong to them. That great attitude, which inspired us for decades before political independence, has been slowly vanishing since. There is now very little of that pulsing of the *mother-heart* in our nation. We concentrated instead on the development of the brain of the people. And, today, that brain power, without the pulse of the *mother-heart* behind, is doing immense havoc.

As remarked by Prof. William McDougall, of the Harvard University in his *The Character and the Conduct of Life*, which I read over five decades ago, every youth must have ambition; but that ambition must be inspired by an ideal of character. If that ideal is not there, that ambition will make for unscrupulousness; for scruples stand in the way of ambition. Our post-independent India, amply and tragically illustrates the truth of this remark.

8. *The Story of Sāvitrī and Satyavān*

In fact, the whole world is today suffering from this power of brain without qualitative enrichment by the purifying and elevating power of love. Wisdom is the product of harmonizing love and knowledge. Now, we in India worship the Divine Mother as part of our national religious heritage. Yet we do not appreciate the worship in a practical way. It is but a custom and tradition with us; we do not feel the need for imbibing the spirit of it. But in the West, this very concept of God as Mother is appealing to more and more people; they find in it a much-needed message for themselves.

If you ask what is the word that they in the West use most in life, in the family and in society, it is the word *love*. It is *love, love, love*. What does it indicate? Psychology will say that when people talk too much about a subject, it only shows that they have no adequate experience of the thing. If you experience a value, you do not talk, need not talk much about it. In the West, there is a real dearth of the experience of love. Bertrand Russell, whom I shall quote fully later, passionately spoke of the need for *love*—'Christian love', as a remedy for the current evils of Western society. Pitirim Sorokin of Harvard University also spoke of the urgent need for a little *altruism* in the human heart. Many other thinkers have expressed similarly.

Addressing the students and staff of a college in Portland, Oregon State, U.S.A., in 1969, during the course of my talk I referred to the need for a little self-discipline in life. Several students stood up and said: "Well Swamiji, we do not believe in all this. We believe only in love!" This was said with all courtesy but there was a firmness and a triumphant note in it. "Oh keep still!" I replied smiling. "What do you know about love?" They all looked around a little puzzled. I continued, "A little nervous titillation and temporary attraction—a sentimental coming together; that is what many of you know about love. That is not true love. It is here today, and tomorrow it goes away. It is not that abiding love which binds two souls together. True love can withstand many tests and trials. Do you desire to know something about such abiding love? I shall tell you a story." They said in chorus: "Yes, do tell us the story, we want to hear it." Then I told them the famous ancient Indian mythically presented real story of Sāvitṛī and Satyavān. You would have been surprised to see the tremendous impression it made on the minds and faces of those students! They had never heard such a type of story where even death could not break the bond of love.

Sāvitṛī, a beautiful princess, when asked by her father, King Aśvapati, to freely choose her husband, fell in love with Satyavān, who was a refugee youth living in a forest with his blind father, Dyumatsena, who had been defeated in a battle. Sāvitṛī's parents resorted to every means to dissuade Sāvitṛī, and the sage Nārada also informed her and her father that the young Satyavān was destined to die within a year. Yet Sāvitṛī, strong in pure love of soul to soul, whose heart had been captured by that refugee prince, married Satyavān and went with him to live the hard life of exile in the forest. She knew of Nārada's prediction, but one

year passed happily. She sought permission to accompany her husband deep into the forest on the fated day. On that very day Satyavān died with his head on the lap of Sāvitṛī. Yama, the god and King of Death arrived to take away Satyavān's soul. Sāvitṛī followed Yama and a wonderful dialogue ensued between the two, in the course of which Yama gave Sāvitṛī some boons, including that her father-in-law would regain his eyesight and his lost kingdom. When Yama asked Sāvitṛī: "Suppose, Sāvitṛī, your husband was a sinner and has to go to hell, what will you do?" She replied: "In that case, Sāvitṛī goes with the one she loves." Highly pleased, Yama replied: "Blessed are your words, my child, I am pleased to give you any boon other than the soul of your husband." Sāvitṛī replied: "May the royal line of my father-in-law be not destroyed; let his kingdom descend to Satyavān's sons." Impressed by the power of Sāvitṛī's pure love—a death-conquering love—and her intelligent subtly-framed request, Yama returned to her her husband's soul, saying: "Love has conquered Death; woman never loved like you, and you are the proof that even I, the God of Death, am powerless against the power of the true love that abides."

9. *Love as the Panacea for our Modern Ills*

This story is generally presented as love conquering death and has been a favourite theme of dramas all over India for ages. Many examples are there of men and women with abiding love for their spouses long confined to bed in sickness, or of those cherishing true love not marrying again after their wives' deaths. When such soulful love disappears from life, the heart's hunger for love finds expression in *much talk* of love. Sometimes, when I addressed women's groups in Canada, U.S.A., Holland, West Germany, or Australia, I used to raise this subject of

love in married life and ask in a humorous vein: "How do you sustain married life in your society?" Then I myself would answer: "By saying a thousand 'thank you's' to each other from morning till night!" The wife brings a glass of water to the husband, and he says 'thank you'; the child brings a glass of water to father or mother, evoking a 'thank you' from them. The child may even protest, saying, 'I brought a glass of water for you and you did not thank me!'"

In spite of all these many 'thank-yous', and use of other endearing terms for each other, marriages do not last in many cases. Sometimes it is like supporting a crumbling house with external bamboo poles. Can a toppling house with broken cement joints between the bricks be kept intact by buttressing from outside? There must be some integrating values inside the house—within the husband and wife—to sustain a marriage. And that value is *love*, a soul to soul relation. It is the capacity to enter into the heart of each other. And this comes only from the soul, from a deeper dimension than the sense organs and the intellect; and it is uniquely human; and modern humanity has neglected it—even denied it. That is what impelled psychologist Carl Jung of Zurich to write his book with the title: *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*.

The agnostic thinker, Bertrand Russell, to whom I referred earlier, in the chastened state of mind after the second world war, says in his book, *Impact of Science on Society*, (Unwin Paper backs, 1976, pp. 70-72).

In a good social system, every man (and woman) will be at once a hero, a common man, a cog, to the greatest possible extent, though if he (or she) is any one of these in an exceptional degree, his other two roles may be diminished.

...The Cog Theory, though mechanically feasible, is humanly the most devastating of the three. A cog, we said, should be *useful*. Yes, but useful for what? You cannot say useful for

providing initiative, since the cog-mentality is antithetic to the hero mentality. If you say useful for the happiness of the common man, you subordinate the machine to its effects in human feelings, which is to abandon the cog theory. You can only justify the cog theory by worship of the machine. You must make the machine an end in itself, not a means to what it produces. Human beings then become like slaves of the lamp of the Arabian Nights. It no longer matters what the machine produces, though, on the whole, bombs will be preferred to food, because they require more elaborate mechanisms for their production. In time, men will come to pray to the machine: "Almighty and most merciful Machine, we have erred and strayed from thy ways like lost screws; we have put in those nuts which we ought not to have put in, and we have left out those nuts which we ought to have put in, and there is no coginess in us"—and so on.

This really won't do. The idolatry of the machine is an abomination. The machine as an object of adoration is the modern form of Satan, and its worship is the modern diabolism.

...Whatever else may be mechanical, values are not, and this is something which no political philosopher must forget.

Again, *ibid.*, (pp 104-105.):

There are certain things that our age needs, and certain things that it should avoid. It needs compassion and a wish that mankind should be happy. ...The things that it must avoid, and that have brought it to the brink of catastrophe, are cruelty, envy, greed, competitiveness, search for irrational subjective certainty, and what the Freudians call the death-wish.

The root of the matter is a very simple and old-fashioned thing, a thing so simple that I am almost ashamed to mention it, for fear of the derisive smile with which wise cynics will greet my words. The thing I mean—please forgive me for mentioning it—is love, Christian love, or compassion. If you feel this, you have a motive for existence, a guide in action, a reason for courage, an imperative necessity for intellectual honesty.

A little love in the heart of human beings can save this otherwise rich modern civilization. Therefore, in the West today, there

is tremendous interest in the concept of God as Mother. Mother represents love. Freud and his psychology had one very bad effect on Western society ; it made some women ashamed of their femininity. That sad chapter is now giving place to a sense of feminine self-respect and even self-assertion. A balanced attitude is slowly taking shape. In the meantime, the Freudian impact made more and more mothers lose their mother-heart, children getting deprived of mother-love, with the resulting social distortions. Children, deprived of love, lost also their love for their parents.

That Freudian invasion, along with a ruthless materialism bereft of some of the sterling virtues of its Western expression, are coming to our country also, making many of our so-called educated people into money-making machines bereft of love in the heart, and often leading to wife-burning on the part of the husband, and utter unconcern for the weaker sections of society by both. We can see in it the setting in, in our people, of a condition of soullessness, and the family distortions and social evils flowing from it. Our people also will experience, after advancing a little more on this downward road, a desire to seek their lost soul, and fruitful methods by which to experience true love, and give the same to others.

Vedanta will then become a living and practical philosophy to us and beckon our people to a truer and fuller life, as it is happening now in the West. We shall then appreciate and learn from the great examples of mother-love such as Sarada Devi's, the Holy Mother's (1853-1920)—the spouse of Sri Ramakrishna. The verses about the *Devī* quoted above is not mere mythology. An event of great significance occurred in the life of Sarada Devi and Sri Ramakrishna.

One of the many aspects of the Divine Mother is Her aspect as the embodiment of

all Beauty ; She is called *Sodāṣī*, the youthful virgin, or *Lalitā*, the Beautiful, or *Tripura-sundarī*, the condensed beauty of all the three worlds. As the consummation of his twelve-year-long spiritual experiments and experiences at the Dakshineswar Kālī Temple near Calcutta, Sri Ramakrishna worshipped Goddess *Sodāṣī* on a dark new-moon night of May 1872, with all the prescribed rituals of the Divine Mother's worship. But one thing was unusual, and remarkable ; he worshipped the Divine Mother in the person of his wedded wife, Sarada Devi. And at the close of the worship, he offered the fruits of all his spiritual experiments and experiences, including his long-used rosary, at the feet of Sarada Devi ; and both entered into deep samādhi till a very late hour of that night. This act of husband worshipping his wedded wife as divine is unprecedented, even in India's long and rich religious history. I was deeply drawn to Holy Mother in 1924 when I was hardly fifteen. I had a loving mother who gave birth to me, but I found a thousand such mothers in the Holy Mother. And during my several lecture tours round the world these forty years. I could witness increasing numbers of Western women and men being drawn to the Holy Mother for the holy and pure *mother-heart* she embodies, a mother-heart which excluded no one, but encompassed in its love Hindus, Muslims, Christians, and others—sinners and drunkards, and the people of East and West. No dogmas or creeds stood in its way. Many serious-minded people in the West are consciously in search of this value called love, and they turn back again to Christianity, not for its creeds and dogmas, but in search of this precious value of love in Jesus Christ and the saints.

So I present these central themes of pure religion before the audiences I address in the West. I tell them: You cannot build a happy married life by the mere external

support of many "thank yous". When real love is present the need for "thank you" becomes reduced to the minimum. "Thank you" are mere words; there is need for feeling behind them. The audience very much appreciate these ideas and express the longing to make changes in that direction. And there was an interesting sequel to this discussion in one of the meetings. At the end of the week-long Vedanta retreat in Oosterbeek, in Holland, there was a farewell session. One of the audience got up to speak, and in hesitation, said: "We are afraid to say 'thank you' to you, Swami, for this week-long intellectual and spiritual service," creating loud laughter among the audience.

10. *Place of Sentiments in Human Life*

This concept of God as Mother is attracting the minds of the people. Why God as Father alone, why not God as Mother? For us in India it is natural. While in the West and in Islamic countries, they call their country fatherland, we call our country motherland- *Mātṛbhūmi*. The *Rāmāyaṇa* expresses in one place the idea: *Jananī Janmabhūmiśca Swargādapi garīyasī*—"Mother and motherland are superior even to heaven." What a beautiful concept! In the Prophet Mohammad's teaching also, in the *Koran*, there is this sentiment expressed, that "*heaven lies at the feet of your Mother*." The capacity for love is also called today the capacity for human communication, heart communicating to heart. I heard the use of this term for the first time used in that sense, from a girl student in America in 1971.

I was sitting in a hall of the Princeton University. An American lady came up to me and said that her daughter wanted to give up her studies and go to India; would I give proper advice to the girl to finish her university studies and then only go to

India? I agreed, and the girl came and sat near me. I asked her: "Why don't you finish the graduation and then go to India?" She replied with much feeling: "It does not help me to communicate with people." "You are right," I said; "present-day education makes one a prisoner of one's individuality, makes one a billiard ball (in the words of Bertrand Russell) which cannot enter into, and communicate, but only collide with another billiard ball. When there is stress on intellect only, but not on feeling also, man becomes reduced to a machine. Father, mother, daughter, son—these relationships are to be based not on logic and utility alone, but also on emotions and sentiments. When these sentiments are taken away, inter-human relations become reduced to nuts and bolts of a machine, as remarked by Bertrand Russell."

I was one day sitting in our office of the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Calcutta; a number of tourists from France entered the office in an exasperated mood. I received them and they all sat down. The conversation started when they asked: "What is all this worship of cows going on in India, when its human beings are dying of hunger and malnutrition? We consider this illogical." I told them: "I shall tell you about it; please patiently listen. There is meaning in it. India was a beef-eating country, long long ago. In the course of several centuries, a certain sentiment began to be built around the cow. Our babies were first taking mother's milk, followed later by cow's milk; slowly that mother-sentiment became transferred to the cow which, along with calves, was part and parcel of the household. After centuries of such experience, the nation developed a mother-sentiment with respect to the cow. It was not dictated by logic alone—such as the importance of cattle for agriculture, but primarily by sentiment. Human life is enriched by a number of such

sentiments. If a family is starving, all the children themselves will object if it is suggested that they can be fed by killing a cow or a calf. Is it not a sign of high culture ?

Certainly, logical it is not, utilitarian it is not. But if logic and utility alone guide human life, and all sentiment is set aside, serious consequences will follow. Here is one's father and mother. They have become old ; they have become economically a burden. Logically speaking, the best thing is to kill them off ; utility dictates it. But no one will do it yet, though some will dump them off to old age homes. There is still a little sentiment left in the human heart. Similarly, the Hindus have a sentiment for this one animal, the cow. It has been feeding us as babies, like our mother, for a few thousand years, and we have slowly transferred upon it our sentiment associated with our mother." Hearing all this, the tourists jointly said : "Now we understand and appreciate this Hindu custom. Nobody ever presented it this way to us. Thank you!" And they took leave, satisfied.

11. Spiritual Orientation of the Ultimate Reality

Indian philosophy teaches humanity not to contract, but to expand the mother-sentiment. The moment you visualize God as Mother, that mother-sentiment goes on percolating into various aspects of human life. It is that expansion of love that is capable of uniting human beings to human beings, and human beings to nature. That is the holistic concept and approach that is appealing to people all over the world more and more. For any human being, man is not an enemy to conquer and exploit ; neither is nature an enemy to conquer and exploit. These are the holistic attitudes fostered by feminine nature, different from the separatist attitudes fostered by masculine

nature, as remarked by Charlene Spretnak in her book on *The Politics of Women's Spirituality*, I referred to in the beginning of my lecture. One needs, and uses, one's mother for one's own development, but one does not exploit her. So also is *prakṛti*, Nature, our mother, to be used wisely for our development, but not to be exploited. The spiritual orientation of this idea is the vision of God as Mother. That *Parā Prakṛti*, *Parā Śakti*, *Ādyā Śakti*, is the infinite Mother who nourishes us all through Her nature's bounty. This is a truth to which India has given a spiritual orientation. Whereas modern Western cosmology calls and conceives of the ultimate reality as merely a physical entity—a background material, ancient Indian Vedānta calls it the Impersonal-Personal Brahman, of the nature of Pure Consciousness. Says the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* (2.1):

*Brahmavid āpnoti param ; tadeṣābhyuktā,
Satyam jñānam anantam Brahma...*

"The knower of Brahman attains the Supreme. That truth is expressed thus: 'Brahman is Truth, Knowledge, and Infinity'."

Where do you realize this truth ? "In your own Self," says the *Upaniṣad*, (*ibid.*) *Yo veda nihitam guṇāyām parama vyoman...* "who realizes It hidden in the supreme cavity of one's heart."

Because we, and the whole universe, have been projected from that Brahman, have been ensouled by It, and will be absorbed into It eventually, says the same *Upaniṣad* (3.1):

*Yato vā imāni bhūtāni jāyante,
yena jātāni jīvanti,
Yat prayanti abhisamviśanti tat
vijijñāsasva, tat Brahmeti...*

"From whom all these manifestations have come, in whom they exist after mani-

festation, and unto whom they return and enter into, know That. That is Brahman."

This is how the Ultimate Reality is presented in Vedanta. It interpenetrates everything in the universe. Being of the nature of pure consciousness, that Reality is not only the *ultimate* Reality, but is also the *intimate* Reality, and is ever present at the depth of our own consciousness; and nature has given us the organic capacity to realize it as well.

The British astro-physicist, Fred Hoyle, had written a book on modern cosmology which I read many years ago, and in which he expressed completely materialistic views about the nature of the universe and its background material; but a few years ago, he wrote another book on the subject, *The Intelligent Universe*, in which he reversed his earlier materialistic world-view. Last year he had visited Hyderabad and I had occasion to hear him and talk to him. He wrote in *The Intelligent Universe* (First American Edition, 1984, page 189):

The picture of the origin of the universe, and of the formation of the galaxies and stars as it has been unfolded in astronomy, is curiously indefinite, like a landscape seen vaguely in a fog. This indefinite unsatisfactory state of affairs contrasts with other parts of astronomy where the picture is bright and clear. A component has evidently been missing from cosmological studies. The origin of the universe, like the solution of the Rubic Cube, requires an intelligence.

His concept of intelligence in the universe is far away from the all-encompassing Brahman of Vedanta; but it is the first step, the right step, in that direction. The steps are halting, mainly because of the fear of modern science being contaminated by the concept of the supernatural, and of the extra-cosmic God, upheld by all Western religions. Indian thought does not believe in the

supernatural, since its concept of Nature, as I have mentioned before, is wide enough to include matter and intelligence, and science, and religion without any mutual conflict. This is revealed a little in another later passage in Fred Hoyle's book, (*ibid.*, page 236):

So, starting from astronomy and biology, with a little physics, we have arrived at religion. What happens if the situation is inverted, and we look at science from the religious point of view? How do the two approaches match up? The answer to this question turns on the form of theology. In contemporary Western teachings, the points of contact are few, essentially because "God" is placed outside the universe and in control of it. By contrast, in many other religions past and present, deities lie very much within the universe. This is the case with god Brahma in modern Hinduism, for example, and it was also true of the gods of the Nordic peoples and Greeks many centuries ago.

Fred Hoyle's knowledge about Hinduism is still elementary; this is revealed from his remark that the "Brahma" concept is of modern Hinduism, whereas that concept has been well developed in the two aspects of its masculine Brahma, the projector of the universe from Himself, and the neuter Brahman, the Impersonal Absolute behind the personal Brahma, a few thousand years ago.

This comprehensiveness of the Vedantic truth of Brahman as the source of the universe has been pointed out by Professor Fritjof Capra in his *Tao of Physics* (pp. 130-31):

The most important characteristic of the Eastern Worldview—one could almost say the essence of it—is the awareness of the unity and mutual inter-relation of all things and events. ...The Eastern traditions constantly refer to this ultimate, indivisible reality which manifests itself in all things, and of which all things are parts. It is called *Brahman* in Hinduism, *Dharmakaya* in Buddhism, *Tao* in Taoism....

12. Conclusion

Vedanta, as we have seen, calls Intelligence *Cit Śakti*. *Cit* is a beautiful word in Sanskrit, meaning consciousness. *Cinmaya Jagat* will be the exact Sanskrit rendering of the title of Fred Hoyle's book, *The Intelligent Universe*. Vedanta also speaks of the universe as the play, *Līlā*, of the Divine Mother. Behind the universe is that mother-heart, whose manifestation, along with all its various good and evil elements, non-violence and violence, can be seen in the cosmos, in the animals, as much as in human beings; and the human being has the power to transcend these limitations. The *Devī Māhātmyam*, therefore, sings (11.6):

*Vidyā samastāḥ tava devī bhedāḥ
Striyāḥ samastāḥ sakalā jagatsu...*

"O Devī, all types of knowledge are Thine own diverse forms; all women also in the world are Thy diverse manifestations."

We have the concept of the Divine Mother

as *Lakṣmī*, Embodiment of all material welfare, and as *Sarasvatī*, the serene Goddess of *Vidyā*, all knowledge, secular as well as sacred. We do not have the big gulf between secular and sacred, as in the West. It is one continuous pursuit of *vidyā*—*vidyā* secular and *vidyā* higher; both are spiritual and are manifestations of the Divine Mother. *Sarasvatī* and *Lakṣmī*—i.e., knowledge hymn as *Nihseṣajādyāpahā*—"one who destroys completely all *jādyā*, or inertness or laziness or dullness."

And so, these are the blessings to humanity from the Divine Mother, in the forms of *Sarasvatī* and *Lakṣmī*—i.e., knowledge scientific and spiritual, and the fruits of knowledge, as material prosperity and social welfare. She is therefore described as *Bhukti-Mukti Pradāyinī*—"Giver of worldly prosperity and spiritual freedom". And that constitutes the totality of human cravings and satisfactions; and that also proclaims the *māhātmya*, glory, of the *Devī*, the Divine Mother.

The Master (Sri Ramakrishna) one day told... 'She (the Holy Mother) is Sarada, Saraswati; she has come to impart knowledge. She has descended by covering up her beauty this time...' On another occasion he said, 'She is the communicator of knowledge, she is full of rarest wisdom. Is she of the common run? She is my Sakti (power)'.

The Relevance of Sri Ramakrishna

V. GOPINATHAN

The sayings of Sri Ramakrishna are simple. As regards their profundity and relevance, they are timeless. Professor V. Gopinathan of Kerala centres his discussion on some teachings of the Master.

That the modern world is passing through a vicious stage is an indubitable fact, well known to all thinking people today. It is highly essential to follow the sayings of Sri Ramakrishna to restore human values and adherence to Dharma in these days of chaos and moral decline. The teachings of Sri Ramakrishna point to a clear solution and a way out of this complicated tangle. The incarnation of purity, abundantly blessed with prophetic vision, resourcefulness of intellect, love of mankind, and profound wisdom, Sri Ramakrishna was quite conscious of the downward trend of the modern world. That is why he suggested countless remedies and invaluable hints for the solutions of baffling problems confronting mankind. This is easily realized by any devout reader of the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, who experiences the sweetness of his utterances or has had occasion to know them vicariously.

“Live in the world; at the same time, hold to God with one of your hands.” This sound advice is, in a nutshell, a clean and clear solution of the perplexing labyrinth of the tangle of life. Though apparently a simple maxim (at least to some people) it is in fact a practicable step to the essence of the Upaniṣads. At the same time, it is an easy step and guideline for all householders. On no occasion did Sri Ramakrishna exhort anyone to flee from life. “Why should you give up the world?” he said. “There is no need of that. You live in the world. Is this world different from God? Think deeply. Look at the mudfish,

uncontaminated by the mud that surrounds it.” In what a superb and simple fashion did Sri Ramakrishna shower his grace on all and sundry! Taking from the pages of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, Sri Ramakrishna pointed to the noble example of Śrī Rāma, who at one time in his boyhood wanted to become an ascetic. Disinterested in worldly pursuits. Śrī Rāma wanted to become a Sannyasin. Then his guru, Vasiṣṭha, said to him: “Rāma, why should you give up the world? Consider well and deep. Is God outside this world? The whole universe itself is a manifestation of His glory. Therefore, you live in this world. Do your duty, following dharma. Be a good and noble example to the rest of mankind.” This sage counsel of Vasiṣṭha was, in reality, a panacea for all evils that existed and exist in the world for generations. What we should forsake is not the world, but the evils that are in us, like lust, anger and money. This was the essence of Sage Vasiṣṭha’s sagacious counsel. And Sri Rama exemplified it through his unquestioning obedience to his father’s will in his noble life.

Lord Śrī Rāma is an ideal hero, not only for Indian people, but for the whole of humanity, and besides, a noble guide. It is easily discernible in all the deeds of Śrī Rāma. Ripe wisdom is replete in all his actions. Never had Śrī Rāma deviated from the path of righteousness and performance of *Dharma*. Even to reclaim his wife Sita, he did not seek the assistance of Vāli, the wicked brother of Sugrīva. Vāli and Rāvaṇa had committed grievous offences and heinous

crimes. Retribution was necessary in both their cases. And they had to be punished by the hand of Śrī Rāma Himself. The deaths of Vāli and Rāvaṇa were indispensable for establishing victory over *adharma*.

What are we to understand from the above? Negligence, or avoidance of one's duty, is surely not *Dharma*. It is not our duty to work for work's sake, but our duty is to see that our *Karma* is performed for the sake of upholding *Dharma*. It is this fundamental principle that Sri Ramakrishna reiterated in all his sayings. "Perform all your duties in the world. At the same time, keep the remembrance of God firmly planted in your mind. Let all your Karma be an offering to God. Follow the main maxim of the *Bhagavad Gītā*." How true!

Like the maid servant in the rich man's mansion, who finishes her work quickly and remembers to feed her dear child at home, like a woman anxious to meet her paramour,—we should always have such great passion for God. The main current of our heart should be directed towards God in the midst of all our actions. There is no influence of *Māyā*, or taint of sin, in such actions prompted by God. This is so since the path directed by Him will always be infallible. Swami Vivekananda, too, chose the right path in his life mission at the expense of his family. He considered his holy mission more important than his duty to his family. One's duty to the world at large is greater than one's duty to narrow family ties. It was Sri Ramakrishna's practical counsel that helped Vivekananda to take a firm decision in this regard. "Yes, go to the temple of Kālī and pray to Her. Goddess Kālī will surely grant your prayer." So said Sri Ramakrishna to his doubting disciple, Narendra. But Narendra couldn't bring himself to pray for worldly things while in the presence of the great Goddess, Kālī.

So, what is our duty, in similar circumstances? Nothing else but to tread along the path shown by God by surrendering everything at His feet. There may be thunderbolts, rains and the roar of ferocious animals all around, but we needn't be afraid. We shall see the clear and peaceful path of light shone by God for our guidance. We have only to make our hearts pure for the indwelling of His pure spirit.

This simple path of action, which is accessible to an individual, is equally accessible to society, to a nation, and to the world at large. This important (and no doubt, the most important of all the counsels of Sri Ramakrishna) meant for the worldly people—the performance of one's duty without attachment, and in complete surrender to God—is undoubtedly a good guideline for the modern world. We should never be concerned with our selfish vested interests, desires for conquest and cravings for flattery and recognition. What is required is the performance of one's duty, or *Dharma*, which will make one worthy in the sight of God. Never should lethargy or cowardice deter us into despondency or shyness in action. We should never deviate from the right path of truthful action, even when there is a lot of suffering and sacrifice involved. As Robert Browning sang in one of his famous poems, "Not on what the vulgar mass call 'work' should sentence pass", but the noble examples of self-sacrificing heroes are to act as our guides.

In this age when fights over trifles and internal dissensions are the order of the day, if only the message of Sri Ramakrishna is carried to every nook and corner of the modern world! Surely, there would rise the glorious chance of resurrecting an ideally beautiful world, free from malice and enmity.

(Continued on page 425)

Common Sense About Meditation

DR. LETA JANE LEWIS

In recent times the word meditation and its practices have acquired many accretions—often misleading. Dr. Lewis, Professor Emerita of California State University, Fresno, U.S.A., elucidates the real meaning, purpose and the goal of meditation. She offers helpful suggestions for practice, too.

To counteract the tension, anxiety, and frustration that affect nearly everyone today, more and more people are seeking refuge in meditation. Some meditate to avoid being overwhelmed by such afflictions as alcoholism, drug addiction, and cancer. Others meditate to build their self-esteem or to develop attitudes which will enable them to get along better with others and succeed in their careers. Meditation techniques are as numerous and various as the difficulties we are trying to overcome. Cancer patients, for instance, sometimes meditate by visualizing their immune cells attacking and destroying their malignant cells.¹ People in stressful situations often seek peace and quiet by meditating on such tranquil aspects of nature as the deep silence of a primeval forest or the unruffled calm of a windless ocean. The majority of these popular meditations have some therapeutic value, and few, if any, are harmful.

We have become so engrossed in creating new meditations to meet various exigencies, thus making meditation a "quasi-science of our own,"² that we tend to forget or simply

ignore the sages of many countries and traditions who first inspired us to explore its possibilities. We initially took up meditation in the hope of achieving something of the enviable calm and poise with which these sages were able to confront life's most trying situations. We chose as our models in meditation such imperturbable wise men as the Hindu monk who is said to have taught philosophy to Alexander the Great when the latter was in India. This sage's wisdom and philosophical acumen so impressed Alexander that he requested him to return to Greece with him. When the sage refused, Alexander, who, of course, was accustomed to having his own way, was infuriated. Like a twentieth-century dictator, he had recourse to violence. He threatened to kill the sage, expecting him to recoil in terror. But the sage didn't recoil in terror; he smiled benevolently. "You can't kill me," he replied, "for I am immortal spirit. I cannot die the death of the body." This monk had acquired serenity through meditation, but he had not

1. See *The Bottom Line* (New York: Broadroom Reports, 1991), January 15, 1991, p. 14.

2. The following meditation exercise by Dr. Ira Progoff is one of these new creations:

Try to duplicate the twilight state between sleeping and waking. By working in that intermediate state of consciousness, you can reach consciousness levels that are difficult to contact any other way.

Meditation Exercise. Sit quietly in a comfort-

able position. Relax. Close your eyes. Follow your breathing until you feel a great calm. On your mental screen picture a deep well. Enter the well and go deeper and deeper. At the bottom of the well is a river. The waters are muddy but they begin to clear.

Examine the images that appear, then allow yourself to become a bit more alert and jot those images down. Then return to the twilight state. Keep moving back and forth jotting down the images.

Ask yourself: Do the images suggest anything?
The Bottom Line, August 30, 1990, pp. 11-12.

meditated in order to do so. His courage was a by-product of his meditation. If he had confined his goal to coping with life's problems, he might have achieved a little success, but he would have continued to be plagued by fears and frustrations. An arrow that is aimed low cannot fly very high.

If he were alive today, the sage could explain that he had achieved this serenity because he had based his meditative practices on the assumption of the divinity of man.³ He might suggest that the contemporary meditator emulate the miner who has just learned from a competent geologist that there is in all probability a rich vein of gold in the ground beneath his feet. If he had been panning for gold in a shallow creek, the miner would immediately drop the pan, seize a shovel, and begin to dig. Similarly, the meditator who has learned on reliable authority that there is a core of divinity within him should abandon his more superficial meditative practices and adopt others better suited to penetrating his own depths.

Before making his first attempts at meditation, an aspirant would benefit from consulting Patañjali, the acknowledged Indian authority on concentration and meditation. In his yoga aphorisms Patañjali states that proper meditation cannot occur without the cessation of all mental activity. But he did not mean that one should try to make the mind a blank by annihilating the thought waves one after the other as they rise into consciousness. He knew that, since the mind, like nature, abhors a vacuum, another thought will immediately spring up to take the place of one that has been routed. He, therefore, recommended that instead of making a futile effort to empty the mind

forcibly, the meditator should try to engage it in "an unbroken flow of thought toward an object of concentration."⁴ If the meditator were to concentrate steadily on any one object, the thought waves would have to stop; there would be no room for them in his mind. Swami Vivekananda once concentrated so effectively on a black dot that his mind was stilled and he caught "glimpses of supersensuous truth."⁵

Swami Vivekananda was able to concentrate on such an uninteresting object as a black dot because his pure mind presented no opposition to his extraordinary willpower; but we are different. For most people, whose minds are in a constant state of flux, the best object for concentration is one to which they are naturally inclined. Sri Ramakrishna told a parable to illustrate how concentration upon a beloved object, in this case, a pet buffalo, can be turned into meditation.

A disciple once came to a teacher to learn how to meditate on God. The teacher gave him instructions, but the disciple soon returned and said that he could not carry them out; every time he tried to meditate, he found himself thinking about his pet buffalo. "Well then," said the teacher, "you meditate on that buffalo you're so fond of." The disciple shut himself up in a room and began to concentrate on the buffalo. After some days, the teacher knocked at his door and the disciple answered: "Sir, I am sorry I can't come out to greet you. The door is too small. My horns will be in the way." Then the teacher smiled and said: "Splendid! you have become identified with the object of your concentration. Now fix that concentration upon God and you will succeed."⁶

4. *The Yoga Aphorisms of Patanjali (How to Know God)*, trans. Swami Prabhavananda and Christopher Isherwood (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1953), p. 173.

5. Swami Vivekananda, *Meditation and its Methods*, ed. Swami Chetanananda (Vedanta Press: Hollywood, 1978), p. 64.

6. *The Yoga Aphorisms of Patanjali (How to Know God)*, pp. 83-84.

3. See Aldous Huxley, "The Minimum Working Hypothesis," in *Vedanta for the Western World*, ed. Christopher Isherwood (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1953), p. 173.

Since it is easier to concentrate on an object that one loves than on an affectively neutral object like a black dot, the spiritually earnest aspirant will meditate most successfully on that aspect of divinity which embodies his dearest aspirations. As he progresses in meditation, his love for it will grow and it will become a powerful force attracting him to itself. But since each meditator is unique personally and spiritually, no one aspect of divinity is universally suitable for meditation. Everyone has his own ideal. Few beginners, however, have had sufficient experience to know their spiritual goals, veiled as they usually are in the mist of an unclarified longing. It is therefore wise for the groping aspirant to seek the assistance of an advanced sage, who can discern his inner tendencies and guide him accordingly. No genuine sage will attempt to force him arbitrarily into some preconceived mould that may not be right for him. The aspirant must take care, however, that the guide he chooses is not motivated by cravings for money, fame, or sense-gratification. Genuine sages are rare, and if the aspirant does not find one, he is better off with no teacher at all. But he need not worry. It has been said, and often proven true, that the teacher will come when the student is ready.

The prospective meditator will find that tradition has provided him with a wealth of time-tested meditations from which to choose the one that is best for him. He could, for instance, think of himself as a fish swimming joyfully in an ocean of divine bliss or a bird soaring ecstatically in a heaven of effulgent light. Beautiful as they are, however, such impersonal meditations are appropriate for only a few people. Because divinity more easily becomes living and real for them when they see it embodied in beings like themselves, most aspirants prefer to meditate on some great sage or divine incarnation. But since the novice has not seen and does not

really know his chosen ideal, he begins with a vague, often stereotyped, notion of it. So meditation bores him at first and he unconsciously tries to escape from it by planning his day, composing his grocery list, or dreaming the hour away.

"Why can't I meditate?" the discouraged aspirant asks after a few months or, possibly, years. When he sits for meditation his thoughts run riot forcing the object of concentration out of his mind. His very best efforts prove futile.

Perhaps he would not be so disappointed by his inability to concentrate if he realized that he is asking too much of himself. He would not expect to learn to play the violin like an old maestro without many years of practice, yet he expects mastery of the still more demanding art of meditation within a brief period of time.⁷ He should not be discouraged. A few words from Swami Prabhavananda will put his efforts in better perspective. "It has been said," the swami writes, "that if the mind can flow uninterruptedly toward the same object for twelve seconds, this may be called concentration. If the mind can continue in that concentration for twelve times twelve seconds (i.e. two minutes and twenty seconds) that may be called meditation."⁸ It would be ridiculous for the average meditator to ask himself to concentrate uninterruptedly for two minutes and twenty seconds. Perfection in meditation is achieved simultaneously with moral and ethical perfection. It is the culmination of all spiritual practices, and its development can reasonably take several life-times. Although the struggling aspirant cannot hold his straying mind steady for more than a moment or two, he is probably more success-

7. Mastery of the violin requires a special aptitude not everyone has, but this is not true of meditation.

8. *The Yoga Aphorisms of Patanjali (How to Know God)*, p. 179.

ful than he believes himself to be. He makes a little progress toward concentration and meditation each time he brings his mind back to his chosen ideal.

The aspirant will better understand his inability to concentrate if he remembers that the hour of meditation is part of a continuum which includes his entire life. He does not suddenly change and become a new person when he sits down to meditate. His mind then is the same mind, filled with the same thoughts that it is at other times. During meditation these thoughts continue their habitual activity of forcing their way, one by one to the focal point of his consciousness in rapid, unending succession.

Patañjali and other experts on meditation therefore stress the importance of practising certain disciplines throughout the day in order to calm the mind for meditation. In his yoga aphorisms, Patañjali lists eight steps in the meditative process. The first two steps, which he considers essential preliminaries to meditation, are "yama," "the observance of the five virtues," and "niyama," the "five rules of conduct." The five virtues are 1) refraining from injury to others, (2) truthfulness in dealing with others and in assessing one's own motives, (3) refraining from taking anything that belongs to another, whether it is tangible property or the credit for an achievement, (4) sexual control, and (5) the non-acceptance of substantial gifts if one is capable of economic independence. The rules of conduct are (1) mental and physical cleanliness, (2) contentment: the avoidance of excessive ambition and acquisitiveness; the cheerful acceptance, not of oppressive conditions that one can change without injury to others, but of conditions that either do not need to be changed or cannot be changed, (3) austerity: the abstention from over-indulgence and the cultivation of self-control without the excesses of self-torture sometimes mistakenly

associated with austerity, (4) the study of the wisdom of the sages and the scriptures with the purpose of integrating it into one's life, and (5) self-surrender to divine inspiration whether it is seen as coming from a personal God, a guru, or one's own higher Self.

Although he considers "yama" and "niyama" to be essential preliminaries to meditation, Patañjali does not intend to imply that the meditator must master all of these virtues and rules of conduct before he begins *trying* to meditate. What he does mean is that the meditator will have to master them before he *succeeds* in meditating, that is, in holding his mind on his ideal for approximately two minutes and twenty seconds. If a person who had never previously attempted to meditate were to observe "yama" and "niyama" flawlessly, he would be able to concentrate uninterruptedly the first time he sat for meditation. On the other hand, a person who regularly sat for meditation but did not struggle to improve himself, would find that his attempts to meditate were fruitless.

Since thoughts of the divine ideal counteract the evil tendencies that interfere with the practice of "yama" and "niyama," it is important for the struggling aspirant to endeavour to maintain recollectedness while going about his daily affairs. Every moment spent thinking of the ideal will not only dispel spiritually harmful thoughts but it will be a positive aid to concentration during meditation. (As a matter of fact any thought of the ideal could be considered a moment of meditation.) Now the objection may be raised that we cannot think of other things while we are doing our work, but a little self-analysis will show us that we think of many irrelevant things while we are working. Then why not think of God? Sri Ramakrishna taught that an aspirant should try to think of his chosen ideal in the way that a para-

mour thinks of her sweetheart. No matter where she is or what she is doing she cannot get him out of her mind.

The aspirant will inevitably protest that he does not feel the attraction of love for his chosen ideal that the paramour feels for her sweetheart. That may be true, but this love can be developed by means of appropriate disciplines. One of the best of these disciplines is the repetition of the divine name, for it draws the aspirant to the ideal. In this way he slowly comes to know the ideal and, knowing it, to love it. The company of holy men and women is also very helpful. Since their lives are transparent to the divinity within, association with them will enable the aspirant to experience something of the divine quality of consciousness which the ideal shares with them. When he cannot have the company of the holy, he can bring them to mind by reading their biographies and by placing photographs of them in his home.

Because meditation itself is part of the mental continuum, all efforts to concentrate on the ideal during meditation will make it easier for the aspirant to maintain recollection at other times. All attempts to meditate will help to purify his heart, and all attempts to purify his heart will facilitate his meditation. Thus, a gracious circle can be developed with all thoughts and actions working toward the one end.

Patience is of the essence in the meditative process. A meditator should never discontinue his meditation merely because it seems dry and boring. Of course he will not become perfect and have the ultimate vision immediately, but, as he goes along, persistence will bring rewards in proportion to his sincerity and steadfastness. We read in the lives of saints and sages that they were blessed with profound spiritual experiences long before they reached their final goal. Each of these experiences strengthened their conviction and inspired them to intensify their efforts. Even a few minutes of steady concentration on the ideal can bring a spiritual awakening that will take a form dear to the meditator. He may, for instance, feel the presence of his ideal and be blessed with its vision. Or he may experience the ineffable sweetness that Brother Lawrence called "the presence of God." On the other hand, an aspirant may make considerable progress before anything definite occurs; then, when he is least expecting it, a veritable reservoir of spiritual consciousness will flood into him. Periods of spiritual dryness commonly alternate with periods of fruition. Being unable to assess his own spiritual attainments, an aspirant may feel unsuccessful and depressed at the very moment when he is making significant progress. Although he cannot foresee it, a spiritual break-through will inevitably occur if he persists. There is no failure in spiritual life.

THE RELEVANCE OF SRI RAMAKRISHNA

(Continued from page 420)

thwarting all obstacles in the path of perfection. If only all the heads of states and power-loving dictators of the world took heed of the good gems of advice scattered in plenty for the welfare and uplift of mankind by Sri Ramakrishna, certainly, a

harmonious world based on love of mankind would become a reality on this earth in this century itself! May Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa bless us all for such redemption of the human race!

Intellect And Soul

MADHAVAN NAIR

Intellect is an instrument of the soul. Through it the soul, or Atman is able to perceive and enjoy the world. These are two distinct spiritual entities which survive the death of the physical body—explains the author who is a former judge in the Kerala High Court.

Everyone knows intellect, but not the Soul. In fact, if one knows the real nature of intellect, he is very near to understanding the nature of Soul. So we will first examine our knowledge of Intellect.

Intellect is that by which we recognise sensations, recall memories, decide actions, conceive thoughts, etc. But men differ about its identity. Some identify the intellect with the brain itself, and some say it is only a faculty or functional capacity of the brain. So, when they hear that intellect recalls memories, they understand that the brain reviews past experiences. On the other hand, some regard intellect as an intelligent incorporeal agent independent of the brain. They say that intellect receives sensations and transmits its decisions for action to the physical organs, through the brain. The former conceive intellect as part of the brain and therefore of the physical body. The latter conceive it as a subtle or non-material entity, quite distinct from the physical body, but which controls the body. This is close to the view of our ancient sages. Recent researches by certain American scientists have affirmed the latter view convincingly.

Dr. Ian Stevenson MD, Carlson Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Virginia Medical School, conducted research and collected evidence on reincarnation in many countries, including Canada, the U.S., Brazil, England, France, Italy, Greece, and others of the Near and Far East, and Africa. He observed primarily children between the ages

of three and five who spontaneously began remembering and talking about their prior lives. Before 1977 he had a collection of above sixteen hundred cases of such remembrance by young children. Such children spoke of their homes, occupations, relatives and other things of the prior life, which were in many cases in far off places, with which the young children had no chance of becoming acquainted in their present life. Their statements of verifiable facts were subjected to elaborate investigations by Dr. Stevenson and others, often with the assistance of local doctors or professors, and were found correct. Details of the investigations conducted by Dr. Stevenson are described in his books, *Twenty Cases Suggestive of Reincarnation*, and *Cases of the Reincarnation Type*. The remembrance of prior lives by some children proves that the memories and the intellect of prior lives continue in them into their present lives. If intellect is a part, or a faculty of, the brain, the intellect of a prior life should have perished with the destruction of the brain at death in the prior body. Its survival to the present life proves that intellect is not a part of the brain or of the physical body. It is a lasting element, independent of the brain and the physical body.

Indian philosophy reckons intellect as a constituent part of the subtle body (*Sūkṣma-śarīra*) that covers the soul. As intellect performs many functions in our system—it knows, thinks, decides, directs, and so on—

it is mentioned as "an agent" with vast powers. It remains active in the body throughout life ; yet no scientist can detect it, even through the most powerful microscope. Scientists have detected light spreading from stars that are millions of light-years away from the earth. One light-year is the distance that light travels in one year at its normal speed of three lakh kilometers per second, but none could detect the existence of the intellect, except by knowing the work it turns. If intellect contained matter, scientists would have detected it somehow, but they could not.

Intellect is invisible and undetectable because it is a non-material element—subtle element in Sāṅkhya Philosophy. *Sāṅkhya Kārikā*, (verse 22) says that the intellect, the ego, the mind, and fifteen other subtle elements (internal and external organs) arise from Primal Nature (*Prakṛti*) ; and thereafter the fundamental particles of matter came into existence, in combinations of five, of those subtle physical elements called *tanmātras*. So all the elements, like the intellect, the mind, and the ego, arise before matter comes into existence. They are subtle and beyond the domain of matter.

When we have understood the existence of intellect as a subtle element performing wonderful operations in our system, it becomes easy for us to comprehend the existence of other subtle elements as well in our system. Soul is another spiritual element that dwells within us. It manifests consciousness throughout the body, and animates the body.

Soul, or Atman, is defined in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (4:3:7): "That which manifests consciousness in the organs"—that infinite entity (*Puruṣa*) that is identified with the intellect and is in the midst of the organs. *Aitareya Upaniṣad* (3:1) defines soul as "that by which one sees things, hears

sounds, smells scents, articulates speech, and distinguishes taste and distaste." The common man calls it life or *jīva* ; the learned man calls it soul or *Ātman*. It is the vital principle in every living being.

Death is the departure of the soul from the physical body. We know that a dying man may see things, hear talk, feel touch ; and suddenly his physical body becomes inert like a log of wood. That momentary interval is too short for the occurrence of any material changes in the organs ; but all the organs that displayed powers of sight, hearing, feeling, smelling, etc. lost their powers. It could not be physical damage that comes to all the organs simultaneously. It is the withdrawal of consciousness that manifests throughout the body. It is the disappearance of consciousness from the physical body. The vital principle, or consciousness, which was radiating throughout the body, has left the body.

Recently certain American doctors investigated so-called death-experiences of patients who died (were clinically declared dead) due to accident during operation, or after childbirth, or due to suffocation, but were soon revived by the application of resuscitating procedures. They recorded that such patients on reviving, remembered their experiences between the 'death' and revival. The patients spoke of having gone out of the body after dying, and floating in the atmosphere for some time, and then re-entering the body to revive it. It shows that death is the exit of the vital principle from the body, and revival is its re-entry into the body. It indicates that the vital principle, which we call life or soul, is a distinct being, independent of the body. The details of death-experiences, narrated by the revived patients, show that the disembodied souls could pass through thick walls, closed doors, ceilings, and metal plates, without the least difficulty. Gauḍapāda, in his commentary on the

Sāṅkhya Kārikā (verse 40), observed that the soul with its subtle body can pass through mountains and the like (*parvatādiṣu*), without any obstruction. It agrees with the narrations of the patients to their doctors. Dr. Ian Stevenson's researches showed that the souls which left the physical body, and did not re-enter it, take rebirth to live another life. Like intellect, the soul is unobservable and undetectable. It is a subtle or spiritual element and an agent of supreme powers. The recollections of revived patients and reborn persons, mentioned above, show that intellect remains with the soul when it goes out of the body.

The *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* says that the soul is covered by five *kośās*, or sheaths. It names the innermost sheath as the sheath of bliss (*Ānandamayakośa*). In deep sleep the soul does not know the pains of the body. It is as if the soul is effectively covered by a sheath that screens off grief or physical pain. The soul resides at peace with itself, in extreme joy. The attributes of the blissful sheath are pleasure and the rest. During profound sleep, this sheath has its fullest play. It also appears when some object

agreeable to oneself presents itself. (See *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi* of Śrī Sāṅkarācārya, verses 207, 208) In other words, the bliss-sheath is only an occasional sheath. Excepting it, the sheath nearest to the soul is the sheath of the intellect. It enwraps the soul fully, and constantly, throughout the soul's existence. It is called the *Vijñānamayakośa* (sheath of intellect) in the Upaniṣads.

As intellect envelops the soul completely, the soul can get perceptions of worldly objects, or experience their sensations, only through the intellect, at times other than while in deep sleep. So, a soul, enamoured of worldly enjoyments, clings to the intellect to share its experiences. It clings so intimately that it is said to identify itself with the intellect that envelops it. Because of such identification, the common man thinks that the soul and the intellect are one and non-different. But in reality they are distinct subtle elements dwelling in the body. When a person thinks of a vicious act, invariably he feels a mild protest or censure from within his interior. The thought of vicious act is by the intellect, and the protest is by the soul in him.

The Advaita is the only system which gives unto man complete possession of himself, takes off all dependence and associated superstitions, thus making us brave to suffer, brave to do, and in the long run attain Absolute Freedom.

—Swami Vivekananda

Tyagaraja—The Saint-Musician

KAMALA S. JAYA RAO

(Continued from the previous issue)

Knowledge

The anxiety and sense of helplessness which a devotee suffers due to separation from the Deity vanish when the knowledge dawns in him that his inner self and God are not different. This realization does not come through mere scholarship. Sri Ramakrishna compared a mere scholar, without devotion to God, to a vulture which, though flying high in the sky, always has its gaze fixed on lowly, rotten things on earth. Tyāgarāja sang likewise—

However learned and great he may be,
he who does not meditate on the path
that leads to Śrīkānta will remain a slave
of the senses.

He takes to violence, covets another's
wealth and wife, slanders and utters lies.

Here, Tyāgarāja plays a pun on the word 'Śrīkānta', which is an epithet of Viṣṇu, the consort of Lakṣmī. He whose heart is not set on the Lord, Śrīkānta, will covet *Srī* (wealth) and *Kāntā* (woman). Tyāgarāja therefore prays for that Knowledge which dawns only in the pure mind—

O Garuḍa-gamana (Viṣṇu)! Will you
not bless me with Jñāna? My mind
has been purified by the chanting of Thy
Name. O Perfect One (*Paripūrṇa*)! O
Immaculate One (*Niṣkalanka*)! Thou
art the Bestower of infinite bliss
(*Niravadhi-sukha-dāyaka*)! Give me that
Knowledge by which I can realize that
I am *Jivātma*, and *Paramātma*, too—that
I am the fourteen worlds, the celestial
beings and the Sages!

When a devotee, a lover of God, prays
for Knowledge, he runs into a dilemma ;
should he become eternally united with the
Lord, or should he maintain some separa-
tion?—should he 'become sugar' or should
he taste and enjoy it? To Tyāgarāja, this
appears to be a no-win situation—

O Thou who are without beginning,
middle or end, *Adi-madhyānta-rahita*!
Which path should I follow, pray tell!
If I take the path that leads to realiza-
tion that I am one with Thee, then You
may berate me as a burden that cannot be
shaken off.

On the other hand, if I call upon Thee
as Protector of Thy Servants (*Dāsa-
varada*), You may chide me as a dualist!

It is obvious that Tyāgarāja was vexed
with the disputes between the various schools
of knowledge. In unambiguous terms he
protests that he is above all these. He knows
that God can be the Personal as well as the
Impersonal; the Lord is immanent in the
whole universe. He has become the twenty-
four cosmic principles, and He manifests
Himself very clearly in great devotees—

Is dualism (*Dvaita*) conducive to Bliss,
or is non-dualism (*Advaita*)?

O Thou, Pure Consciousness, Universal
Witness, explain this to me in detail.
Thou, who sport in the five elements, in
the Trinity, and in the hearts of the
devotees, tell me which is more conducive
to Bliss!

Tyāgarāja had the realization that Pure
Love and Pure Knowledge are the same.

The important thing is to follow sincerely any path. *Bhakti-mārga*, or the dualistic path, can also lead to Beatitude, but, though considered the easiest of all the paths to God, even that path demands dispassion—

Can devotion to Rāma be won easily by those who take repeated births and consider this worldly life as the ideal?

Only those who understand that wife, sons, relatives, houses and gold are impermanent can attain to it.

Only those who seek holy men and serve them, hear and realize that Hari alone is All, and meditate on Him, can attain it. Only those blessed souls whose worship is not pompous (*rājasik*) and who repeat the excellent mantra, which is constantly on Tyāgarāja's tongue, can attain to it.

Glory of the Name

Tyāgarāja's path was the path of devotion. With authority born of experience, he praised the glory of the divine name. To him there was no greater happiness than to chant the Lord's names, the means by which one realizes one's own true nature—

Is there a bliss greater than dancing and singing in the ecstasy of joy, praying for communion with Him?

Chanting Śrī Hari's name, forgetting the body and sense-organs, and becoming united with Him (*So'ham*) is sufficient! O Lord! To realize at the time of *Japa* that Thou art the whole universe—a fact admitted by all good souls—is there greater bliss than this?

In this song, as well as in the following one, the Saint declares that chanting the holy name (*Japam*) is a help to meditation. Constant remembrance of the mantra brings one the realization that the whole universe and everything in it is nothing but God. The Name takes form and fills the heart.

The *Name* and the *Named* are not different but are one and the same—

For one who has taken human birth, chanting *Rāma-nāma* is the only bliss. It gives joy even to the *rāja-yogis*!

By listening to *Rāma-nāma*, Rāma's form fills the heart, which overflows with love for Him.

Chant it the way desireless Tyāgarāja chants it!

'Tyāga-rāja, Lord of Renouncers', is also an epithet of Lord Śiva, who burnt all desires to ashes. The Saint teaches, like Sri Ramakrishna, that "*having attained this rare human birth, the supreme need is to develop love for the Lotus Feet of God.*" We can do this easily by chanting the Name, desiring nothing else. However, mere mechanical repetition will not do; one must constantly reflect on the deeper significance—

O Mind! Chanting the Name, meditate on Rāma and try to fathom the glory of His Līlā!

Ramā [different spelling] is a synonym for 'beautiful women'. If you dwell on that, you will have to fight lust and passion. Rāma [on the other hand] is an epithet of the Supreme Lord, which puts an end to life's ills.

Arka is the name of a plant. How will it still the monkey-like (restless) mind? But *Arka* is also the epithet of the Sun, which dispels the darkness of perverse reasoning (*kutarka*). *Aja* is a synonym for the goat. How can it satisfy your desires? But *Aja* is also Brahma (the Birthless), uttering which you shall gain victory!

Chanting the divine name and knowing its significance is worship enough. Such a devotee passes the stage of external worship and rituals—

O Mind! That human life is blessed in

which the Lord is enshrined on a golden throne within (*mānasa kanaka pīṭha*), and worshipped with excellent names like 'Śiva' and 'Rāma'.

Place Him, who revels in the sport of the Universe (*sakala-līlā-vinoda*), the *Para-mātman*, in the dias bedecked with gems called musical notes, and worship the Feet of Śrī Rāma, the One who adorns Tyāgarāja's heart with the flowers of His many names (*nāma-kusuma*).

Beauty of the Form

Tyāgarāja becomes ecstatic describing and praising the Form—

No gods can equal Thee!

To compare is like a wick-lamp to a torch, a stream to a river, the stars to the moon, or a lake to the sea!

He pleads with Śrī Rāma to show His most beautiful form—

Raghuvīra, Bestower of Boons, form and towering like Mount Meru! Do Thou come, and let me behold Thee! Do Thou reveal Thy graceful gait, Thy body shining like a water-laden cloud with grandeur!

Rāma is portrayed with characteristics of unsurpassed beauty, grace and valour. He is the glory of the Solar Dynasty (*Dinamaṇi vaiṣṇava tilaka*), the rising Moon on the ocean of the Solar Dynasty. His body shines like a water-laden cloud (*nīla vārivāha kānti*) and is resplendent like an emerald (*marakatha maṇi varṇa*). His face, charming and beautiful (*kamaṇīya ānana*) excels the beauty of the full moon (*mukhajīta soma*). His lips are pinkish-red (*arunābha adhara*), his sparkling teeth (*suruchira dantāvali*) resemble slender jasmine petals (*kunda radana*). He is lotus-eyed (*nalina locana*). Dressed in golden-hued silk cloth (*kanakamaya cela*), wearing a gold crown and large ear-pendants,

he always carries his bow and arrows. He is soft-spoken (*mṛdu bhāṣaṇa*).

Tyāgarāja's Rāma is never alone. Sītā is always at his side and he is surrounded by his loving and devout brothers, the great devotee. Ānjaneya, Sugrīva, Vibhīṣaṇa, Śabarī, and others who received His protection and blessings.

As he reflected on the beautiful form of Rāma, the Saint was overcome by *Vātsalya bhāva* and he desired to decorate the Lord with his own hands—reminding us of mother Yaśodā—

O Lord, I shall adorn Thee with flowers and gain the admiration of Indira, Brahmā and others.

I shall put shining golden anklets with bells on Your feet, Wrap You in excellent, gold-laced silk cloth, adorn Your hair with Parijāta flowers, and then I shall kiss Your beautiful face...

If a devotee but takes one step towards God, He will come ten steps towards the devotee. He keeps His word and comes to Tyāgarāja, walking all the way (from where, one wonders though!)—

Lord of my life (*Prāṇanātha*)! Have You come walking all the way to bless me? Knowing the unexpressed yearning of my heart (that the sole aim of my life is to see Your Lotus-eyed Face) have you come walking all the way?

Nāadopāsana

Thus pleading, cajoling, praising His attributes; in surrender and prayer through songs of sublime poetry and excellence, Tyāgarāja had repeated visions of the Lord and became a *Jivanmukta*, one liberated in life. Music to him, was not a mere mode of worship, much less an art to be cultivated;

it was Divinity Itself. He was a *Nādupāsaka*, a worshipper of *Nāda-Brahman*. Hence, like all musicians of old he practised the art with rare dedication and devotion, keeping body, mind and speech always pure with a concentrated mind. He therefore felt that salvation was easy for one who possessed musical knowledge—

Can anyone but a *Jīvanmukta* attain salvation (*Mokṣa*)? Can one who does not possess true devotion and knowledge of music, attain salvation?

The vital air (*Prāṇa*) comes into contact with the Energy (*Anala*) within, and the *Pranava Nāda* is produced, which diversifies into the seven key notes (*sapta-svara*).

Music was the very life of Tyāgarāja. Like Śrī Chaitanya, who invited people to enjoy the 'delicious broth of *magur* fish' and the 'embrace of Mother Earth', the Saint too, felt that there was no greater enticement than music and no woman more beautiful than the seven notes of the musical scale—

Drink the nectar of music (*rāga sudhā rasam*) and delight in it, O Mind!

It will give you the fruits of *yāga*, *yoga*, *!yāga* and *bhoga*. Tyāgarāja knows that those who have knowledge of *Nāda*, *Omkāra*, and *Svara*, which are the nature of *Sadāśiva*, become *Jīvanmuktas*!

O Mind! Adore the beautiful damsels called the seven key notes, who shine through the navel, heart, throat, tongue and nose—who shine in the *Rig* and *Sāma Vedas*, in the core of the *Gāyatrī*, and in the minds of gods, holy men and Tyāgarāja!

Tyāgarāja depicted the technique of proper singing, wherein sound rises from the depths of one's heart and body—a technique by which the ancient *Rṣis* chanted the *Vedas* and the *Gāyatrī*, so that the chanting reverberated like the sound of *Omkāra*. It is

only by such discipline that the gods are pleased. The gods themselves attained glory through this technique.

Saint Tyāgarāja worshipped the Form of God as Śrī Rāma, and the Formless through *Nādupāsana*. The culmination of his spiritual practice was reached when *Nāda* presented Itself to him as Rāma, his Chosen Deity. It was the culminating point of devotion where the aspirant realized that the same Ultimate Reality is "the Eternally Formed and the Eternally Formless."

The divine musician made no distinction thus between the means and the end. Music was his way of worship, his communication, and communion with the Divine, and it was Divinity Itself. The Saint worshipped where there exists no more difference between the Worshipped and the Worshipper—for what else was music to Tyāgarāja, than his very soul, arising from the depths of his being, and emanating forth as song? It is this that placed the Master and his music far above any other that India has produced. And it is for this that the musicians of the Caranatic School, even today, are judged by how well they render Tyāgarāja's *kīrtanas*. Intuitively and unconsciously, the audience requires that the musician's heart and soul should mingle with the sublime poetry and high philosophy of the *kīrtana* Master.

Congregational Music

Tyāgarāja created compositions suited for choral singing in religious congregations as well. He adopted a way of life known as '*Uncha Vṛitti*', where the devotee goes alone or in group, singing through the streets and towns, accepting for his sustenance only what he receives as alms.

The holy Saint performed special worship of Śrī Rāma on *Ekādaśī* days. It is said

(Continued on page 435)

The Eternal Truth

DR. ALEXANDER CHANDANPALLY

Oh! fantasy that fans the fire of *mundane* desires and
the friend that befriended my reflection,
after he came out of the Noble womb.
Kept him shackled by the chain you made him forge,
to enjoy the sensory sentient pleasures,
forgetting the *Ananda*—Eternal Bliss.

Deluded in his company, laboured hard to mine gold
forgetting the inexhaustible *Mine* of mine
to build a home spun with sand,
refusing the unspun house of *Sat* and *Chit*.

When the desire to amass gold swelled,
confronted and confused by constant despair,
he showed god externally,
forgetting the *God* of gods,
enthroned in the *Mind* of minds—*Mahat*.
Oh! fancy! strong is your wailing power!—*Maya*!!

The deluded reflection—*Aham*,
waddled through many swaddled wombs,
gratified the *panchendriyas*, bound and chained
while *I* stayed mute as a witness.

Once, the stupefied stupe, stooped on my stoop,
stood still as a sheep
gazing at my stupendousness,
and picked up enough courage,
to consult me in confidence,
befriending 'Discrimination' and
leaving the swaddled bundles—*Vasana-s*,
cut the chain by Dispassion.

Awakened, caught a glimpse of the truth—*Neti, Neti*,
left his deluder forever
to tread on razor's edge,
along the narrow path,
with pointed attention,
to reach his home—the Source.
The TRUTH Eternal—*Tat-tvam-asi*,
filled with *Sat-Chit-Ananda*.

Unpublished Letters

*From Swami Abhedananda**

January 26th 1912

Vedanta Ashrama
West Cornwall,
Conn.

Dear Mr. Cobb,

I am very sorry to hear all that you have said in your letter of the 10th instant duly received.

"Heaven helps those who help themselves." There is one Supreme Power above all the forces of the Astral Plane. Believe in Him and pray to Him for strength & help. You must learn to look at failure and success alike & work earnestly without seeking the result. Even when you fail, you must go on trying again & again holding the thought of success in your mind & when you do not get exactly what you want. Make another effort with a cheerful heart and having faith in that Supreme Will which is the Dispenser of all results. Read my "Philosophy of Work" published by the Vedanta Society at 135 West 80th Street, New York. That will help you much in your present state of mind.

With best wishes

Very sincerely yours,
Swami Abhedananda

* * *

From Alasinga Perumal to Josephine MacLeod

Pachaiyappa's College
Madras
March 23, 1904

My dear and beloved Sister,

I don't know how to thank you for your

*We are grateful to the Swami-in-charge, Vedanta Society, New York for making this letter available for publication in this journal.

very kind letter from Rome. If there is one American adorer of Swamiji more than others that has been constantly before my mind's eye it is yourself and it is no exaggeration to say that mail after mail has passed away with a resolve to write to you but without accomplishing the same. There was evidently a fatality about it. A letter of yours containing your American and Paris addresses I carefully put in my almirah and made useless searches to find it out till two days prior to the receipt of your letter. I tumbled upon it in searching for another paper. The discovery of your old letter and the receipt of your last letter are rather strikingly coincident. Hence the fatality I spoke of. In the meantime I asked Sister Nivedita for your address several times and she never gave it to me.

What you say regarding our beloved "Prophet" chokes up my throat and reminds me of a heart that beats synchronously with mine thousands of miles away in that old centre of the warrior-civilisation. In my meditative mood I often think and feel He is with us but more often conclude He has left us too soon. When and where are we to meet him again is a problem which I don't in the least expect to solve before my end comes. His life of activity has produced in me only a life of inactivity. After two years of good sleep I am awake again a little but and going about with dear Swami Ramakrishnananda for the last fortnight begging from house to house in Triplicane and thus have collected about Rs. 500. Some half a dozen of us have set apart our mornings for this purpose. How long this enthusiasm will last remains to be seen. About Rs. 1000 was subscribed for more than a year ago. Thus we stand in the matter of the Vivekananda Memorial. Though I have long known that

we are not likely to meet again, I still indulge in the fond hope that you may be given work to do and the required health to see it in a fair way of accomplishment. Swami Ramakrishnananda is still in the Castle (Kernan). What is to become of the latter it is impossible to say just now. In a few months more we will be in a better position to judge of its future. Swami R— will in all probability write to you by the next mail. You know, dear sister, that domestically I have never been happy. The bother is perhaps less now as I have got quite

familiar with it. Being a little bit of a madcap I may write to you trash at times and I am sure you will with your usual good nature overlook the same. As a dear sister loving a common father the impression you have left in mind is indelible and can never be effaced. It gives me therefore very great pleasure to learn that your health is better and let me hope that it will be given to us to meet again.

Ever yours with fraternal regards,
Alasinga

TYAGARAJA—THE SAINT-MUSICIAN

(Continued from page 432)

that after Swami Brahmananda witnessed the intense spiritual atmosphere of *Rāmanāma* singing in the South, that he introduced the observance of *Ekādaśī* days in all of the centres of the Ramakrishna Math. Certainly this tradition has a hoary past.

The *kīrtanas* of Tyāgarāja which are available to us today (numbering about eight hundred) also include songs written for two operas—the *Prahlāda Bhakti Vijayamu* and the *Nauka Charitramu*. Music

in India, even in the not too distant past, was a great source of power and inspiration by which the common people learned philosophy, mythology and *dharma*, and were helped to travel on the spiritual path. Today, when music is associated with din and noise, when musicians perform to please human audiences alone, and not the gods, it is essential that we understand how true religious feeling in the past, permeated every art form and every common act of the people.

REVIEWS & NOTICES

1. QUEST FOR INSPIRATION &
2. QUEST FOR EXCELLENCE, both
compiled by SRI O.P. GHAI. Published by
The Institute for Personal Development,
1-10 Green Park Extension, New Delhi
110-016, 1990. 112 pages Rs. 75.00 & 154
pages, Rs. 100.00 respectively.

Quest for Inspiration is an anthology of
verse and prose by some famous and some
less widely known authors. The material is
aimed at providing inspiration to persons
seeking higher values in life. One has to
consciously strive for a better life, and as
Swami Vivekananda says (p. 97), "...Never
mind failures; they are quite natural, they
are the beauty of life. ...Hold to the ideal...
and if you fail...make the attempt once
more." Passages such as these presented in
the book can help only those in low spirits,
but bring added joy to those in good cheer.
There is no problem in life that cannot be
solved, for as St. Francis of Assisi says
(p. 100), every problem already has a solu-
tion in existence, as every mathematical
problem had already a solution before man
solved it. The thing is to seek the solution,
and the inspiration for it can come through
the beautiful verses and passage provided
here.

The solution to life's problems can be
arrived at through prayer too. The second
book under review, *Quest for Excellence*, is
a collection of sayings on God, faith, and
prayers. Faith in an Eternal Principle and
prayer have sustained many men and women
in their struggle to achieve excellence in
life. Unfortunately, modern man has neither
the time nor the inclination for this, and
Carl Jung (p. 46) believed that many of his
patients fell ill because they had lost "...that
which the living religions of every age have
given to their followers."

When Mahatma Gandhi (p. 15) defines
prayer as a longing of the soul, he is only
reiterating the view of all spiritual seekers.
However, ordinary aspirants wish to place
before God their grievances and their
desires—although they may not always go
well with Thomas Webb, who prayed

(p. 137) for "a good digestion and also some-
thing to digest"!

Modern man's problem is he does not
know whom to pray to. As George
Macdonald says (p. 65): "How often we
look upon God as our last and feeblest
resource! We go to him because we have
nowhere else to go." The book under review
helps us in formulating our own prayers,
and the readers may, along with the anony-
mous author (p. 147), thank the Heavenly
Father (or Mother) for the privilege of
prayer, that is perhaps granted to mankind
alone.

Books such as these need to be in one's
personal collection. Unfortunately, the prices
are a bit prohibitive. But the compiler needs
to be congratulated for his painstaking effort
in sifting and searching through a very large
number of books to bring out these two
anthologies.

Dr. Kamala Jaya Rao

1. COSMIC ECUMENISM VIA HINDU-
BUDDHIST CATHOLICISM (An autobio-
graphy of an Indian Dominican Monk) by
Anthony Elenjittam (Alias, Bhiksu Isa-
bodhananda) Aquinas Publications, Sadhana
Hall, Mount Mary, Bandra, Bombay 400-050.

2. THE YOGA PHILOSOPHY OF
PATANJALI, by Anthony Elenjittam,
Aquinas Publications, Sadhana Hall, Mount
Mary, Bandra, Bombay 400-050.

The first and the second books under
review are by the same author, Anthony
Elenjittam (Alias, Bhikshu Isabodha-
nanda). The first is an autobiography and
the second is a translation of *Patanjali
Sūtras* with interpretation. The nature of
the interpretation will be revealed if we read
the first book, the autobiography of the
author. So we have reviewed the first book
first and then the second in light of the
former.

The very name of the first book, *Cosmic
Ecumenism*, suggests that the author claims
to be a universal man having respect and

adoration for the different religions, systems of philosophy and cultures of the world. He was a child of Kerala Catholic Church. Later on he went to Cambridge where he wrote a thesis on the theme, 'Dharmadvaitam or the Non-duality of Religions'. After completing his thesis he went to London where he worked in factories and workshops. He also worked as a journalist in Fleet Street, London.

Returning to India, he worked at the Brahmo Samaj, Calcutta as the Editor of *The Indian Messenger* and as the Joint Editor of *The Eastern Express Daily*. He went to Noakhali to work with Mahatma Gandhi in his Peace Mission. He had been with the Ramakrishna Mission for a few years. Then he developed his intimacy with the Mahabodhi Society. He became the Director of the Ramchoddar Lotvala Trust for Eastern Philosophy in Bombay. Both in Calcutta and in Bombay he was engaged in youth movements and rural activities. He started collecting street children under shady trees, and thus began the history of the Welfare Society for Destitute Children. He alternated between Europe and India, creating meditation centres and helping the European youth in their spiritual problems, and in India continuing to work for the economically and socially underprivileged children. He has written many books in English and Italian, preaching one world, one humanity, and one world citizenship ideal. He has always been a champion for world peace.

A man of chequered career, wide studies and deep understanding, Anthony Elenjimitam could realize that Truth is one, religion is one, man is one, and human beings speak of differences and quarrel with each other due to ignorance. This is his Cosmic Ecumenism. This he develops in his autobiography which contains 18 chapters. Anthony was a Hindu to the Hindus, a Buddhist to the Buddhists, a Catholic to the Catholics, an Anglican to the Anglicans, a Jain to the Jains, a Mahayanist to the Mahayanists, a Theravadin to the Theravadins, and became 'all to all men'. He claims to be 'a free citizen in the Kingdom of God'. He is for 'a wedding between

Thomas Aquinas and Shankaracharya, between what is best in the Latin culture and in Sanskrit-Pali spirituality, a fusion, a wedding and union between the broad Christian-Greco-Roman culture with the Hindu-Buddhist world, and within such a catholic outlook as to incorporate and integrate the findings of modern science and technology and the spiritual traditions of all other religions and philosophical traditions of the whole of mankind which is our true home, our homeland, and our divine mansion under the Sun.

Cosmic Ecumenism is really a brilliant book which widens our outlook, broadens our understanding and deepens our comprehension. The book deserves wide circulation for better human relationships in religion, philosophy and culture as a whole.

The second book, *The Yoga Philosophy of Patañjali*, by Anthony Elenjimitam, exhibits his cosmic ecumenism which has been discussed in the first book.

Though the *Yoga Sūtras* are written by Patañjali, still his intentions we cannot read without the annotation of Vyāsa, which is known as the *Vyāsa Bhāṣya*. The reviewer has reasons to believe that Anthony has not followed this annotation in his book. The author himself says: "I have taken the original Sanskrit aphorisms of Patañjali, the supreme master and authority in Yoga, and have added their transliteration in Roman script to help those who cannot read Devanagiri script." Then is given a literal translation of each Sanskrit aphorism, putting within brackets the implied words or meanings with a view to making the meaning of each aphorism clearer. Vyāsa is not mentioned anywhere.

The book includes three chapters—(1) Introduction to the Yoga Philosophy, (2) Brahmacharya in the Yoga Philosophy, and (3) *Yoga Aphorisms of Patañjali*.

In the 'Introduction to Yoga Philosophy', the author observes: "Sāṅkhya has basically remained faithful to the teachings of Kapila as enshrined in his *Sāṅkhya Kārikā*." Kapila actually wrote the *Sāṅkhya Sūtras* which are

the basis of Sāṅkhya Philosophy. Íśvara Kṛṣṇa, and not Kapila, composed the *Sāṅkhya Kārikā*, which is an important text. The author writes: "This seeing God, realizing God, is Darshan in Indian philosophy, be it Yoga, Vedānta or Mīmāṃsā." But the Pūrva Mīmāṃsā Philosophy is primarily atheistic and Advaita Vedānta considers the God of religion (in the dualistic concept) as within the realm of Māyā, *anitya* from the transcendental standpoint.

On pages 16-18, the author discusses Yoga Philosophy. There he speaks of 'Jñāna-yoga', 'Karma-yoga', 'Bhakti-yoga' and 'Haṭha-yoga' and concludes that 'Rāja-yoga' of Patañjali represents the integral Yoga wherein the intellectual, devotional and the bodily, the Jñānayoga, Bhakti-yoga, and Haṭha-yoga are wonderfully synthesized... In Indian tradition, Rāja-yoga is considered different from Bhakti-yoga and Haṭha-yoga.

In the second chapter (page 44) the author observes: "...the real superman of Frederick Nietzsche and Sri Aurobindo is the one who has transcanalised his sexual instinct to the highest." One will be shocked to find this reference to Sri Aurobindo. Nietzsche's superman is 'a blond beast' and Aurobindo's is a perfect spiritual being. Moreover, Nietzsche never believed in *brahmacarya* as we find it in Yoga Philosophy.

The author writes '*anukamba*' (page 86) which should be '*anukampa*'. In page 196, he says: "Discrimination ... in both Vedānta and Yoga is always between the Real and the unreal, the Puruṣa, and Prakṛti." According to the author (page 62), the scriptures or *āgamas* are irrational and the philosopher-saints like Shankara saved them through rational interpretation. Shankara himself, we know, would not admit this.

In conformity with the cosmic ecumenism of the author, sometimes he brings in the Sufis, the Zen Buddhists, Jesus, St. John, the Lamas of Tibet, Leo Tolstoy, Aldous Huxley, Vivekananda, Sri Ramakrishna, Mohammed, Zoroaster, Krishna, Socrates, Plato, St. Augustine and others to make his points. His wide reading, catholic approach

and own understanding will give a reader an opportunity for thinking afresh.

But the author is more interested in living than in thinking. He observes: "Yoga Aphorisms have helped the present author immensely. I do hope that this new translation and commentary with an introduction to Yoga Philosophy will help fellow-tramps in many countries and in many religions to find the anchorage in the port of Peace, Bliss and Power, after being tossed about to and fro, or even lost, shipwrecked in this stormy sea of ignorance and sin." For the fulfilment of his hope the book requires wide circulation.

Dr. Nirod Baran Chakraborty

MEDITATIONS, by A. R. NATARAJAN. Published by The Ramana Maharshi Centre for Learning, 40/41 2nd Cross, Lower Palace Orchards, Bangalore 560-003. 107 pages; Rs. 15.00.

The rich contents of this elegantly bound and printed book are going to leave their fragrance for a long time. It is not a book to be read hurriedly and forgotten after a few hours. Sri A. R. Natarajan, seeker himself, has put his soul and heart in explaining abstruse matters in simple language and through examples drawn from day-to-day life. Sri Ramana made spiritual life look so simple; and drove home the truth that Self-realization is within the reach of everyone. In fact, it is simple; but it is our discursive thought that weaves scholastic cobwebs round it. The requisites for the life of the spirit are a little earnestness, determination and patience. The mind, which is a beehive of disorderly thoughts has to be patiently coaxed and trained, and by long efforts made to come to grips with itself. The task has been made all the more arduous because of our long habit of shaky resolution and attachment to unhelpful wrong thinking. The reverse process, quelling the thoughts, says the author, in the beginning appears to be difficult, but a little taste of the stillness and joy that springs from small successes produce their own momentum.

Twenty-four quotations from the teachings of Sri Ramana have been carefully selected,

keeping in view the common problems of a cross-section of persons. The author has elucidated on these quotes in simple language and with the felicity born of his own years of sadhana. A few examples can be cited here to show the gamut of topics he discusses which have direct bearing on our life in the world: "The Resting of the Mind"; "What have you come here for?"; "Who is the Meditator?"; "Everything is Worship."; "What is Life?"; "Should one Pray?"; "Dreams"; "How Free are We?" and "Thoughts and Happiness".

The first question an aspirant asks is, "How to take the first step on the path of self-enquiry?" Or, "Who am I?" Sri Natarajan's answer to this question is: "Reflecting upon the light so thrown by Ramana on the mind, one finds that the mind can be said to consist of two kinds of thoughts—the individual 'I-thought', and 'other thoughts'. The 'I-thought', the sense of individuality, reflects the consciousness or intelligence. ...The first step would be to manage the separation of the conscious 'I-thought' from the other thoughts. This is achieved when the mind's attention is not paid to other thoughts." (p. 5) The author further rings a note of caution: that freeing the mind only from unwanted thoughts, while clinging to pleasant thoughts, is not possible. This so-called 'pleasant' is also the product of ignorance. Sri Natarajan has dwelt in detail throughout his book on the practice of 'separating I-thought from other thoughts'. This is meditation. Therefore, Maharshi sums up: "Remain as the meditator." (There is no need to cogitate *about* meditation; dive into it!)

Throwing light on Grace and effort, Sri Natarajan rightly remarks: "It is only through effort, through meditation, through self-enquiry, that one awakens to the flow of grace." Hence Ramana says that grace is vouchsafed only to those who put in the necessary effort—grace is active for them. (p. 32) Doing nothing, but crying oneself hoarse for the Guru's grace has little significance in spiritual life.

Between active life in the world and the active life of devotion—no such artificial division is sustainable, says the author. Ramana has shown that doing the allotted duties that have come to us, either by karmic cause, or by other—with faith (*śraddhā*)—is devotion. Here is the best example: One evening while Ramana was coming down the hill, a sweeper was also coming that way and wanted to show obeisance by making prostration. Ramana said: "Doing your job diligently is prostration." (p. 55) Work and meditation are not contradictory, but complementary. Diligence presupposes an orderly mind and such mind is fit for meditation. Leading throughout the day an unorganized life, and trying for quiet meditation, are not compatible.

The author voices the pertinent question that a seeker is apt to ask—"How to ascertain that one is progressing on the spiritual path? and What is the yardstick to measure it?" Maharshi answers that the following are the signs: "In peace of mind, in power to deal with troubles, in power all round—always unconscious power." (p. 69) Another question often raised is: "Is everything predetermined? Haven't we any free will to change inexorable destiny?" According to Ramana, destiny concerns only the body. Sri Natarajan observes wisely: "Let the body experience its allotted destiny, but it is up to each one to be unaffected mentally by it, by exercising free will and untying the bond of attachment. (p. 85) Happiness is natural to all human beings. The obstacle to it is a plethora of discursive thoughts. The author quotes, appropriately the teaching of the sage. "Ramana says that while by habit we believe that it is natural to think, the opposite is the truth. Silence is natural and thinking is not." (p. 97).

The slender volume abounds with many other sage counsels and insightful observations. Many will find the book not only useful for dispelling their genuine doubts, but also for providing an additional fillip to their efforts.

S.M.

PRACTICAL SPIRITUALITY

On being presented with some new calendars, Sri Ramana Maharshi said: "You bring a new calendar to help me remember the days, when I often have serious doubts as to what year it is. Time is all one to me.

I said to Maharshi that a certain appointment I had was a waste of time. He smiled: "There is no time, how can you waste it?"

Q. Does distance have any effect on guru's grace ?

A. Time and space are within us.

Time is only an idea. There is only the Reality. Whatever you think of it, it looks like that. If you call it time, it is time. If you call it existence, it is existence, and some after calling it time divide it into days, months and years. The Reality cannot be new. It must exist even now ; and it does exist. There is in that state, no present, nor past, nor future. It is beyond time. It is ever there.

Q. Does the Realised Sage see the world ?

A. Yes. But his outlook differs. Cinema pictures move, but go and hold them. What do you hold ? Only the screen. Let the pictures disappear. What remains over ? The screen again. So also here. Even when world appears the Jñāni sees it only as a manifestation of the Self.

Q. From where do these objects arise ?

A. Just wherefrom you arise. The subject

comprehends the object also. That one aspect is an all-comprehensive aspect. See yourself first ; and then see the objects. What is not in you, cannot appear outside.

Q. Are the stones etc. destined to be as they are always ?

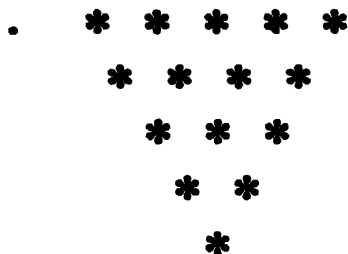
A. Who sees stones ? They are perceived by your mind. So they are in your mind. Whose mind is it ? The questioner must find himself. If the Self be found, this question would not arise. The Self is more intimate than objects. Find the subject and the objects will take care of themselves. The objects are seen by different persons, according to their outlook, and theories are evolved. But who is the seer, the recogniser of these theories ? It is you. Find your Self. Then there is an end of these vagaries of the mind.

Q. What are the first steps to spiritual practice ?

A. In the beginning, one has to be told that he is not the body, because he thinks that he is the body only, whereas he is the body and all else. The body is only a part. Let him know it firmly. He must first discern *Chit* from *Jada* and be the *Chit* only. Later let him realise that *Jada* is none else than *Chit*. This is discrimination. The initial viveka must persist to the end. Its fructification is Mokṣa.

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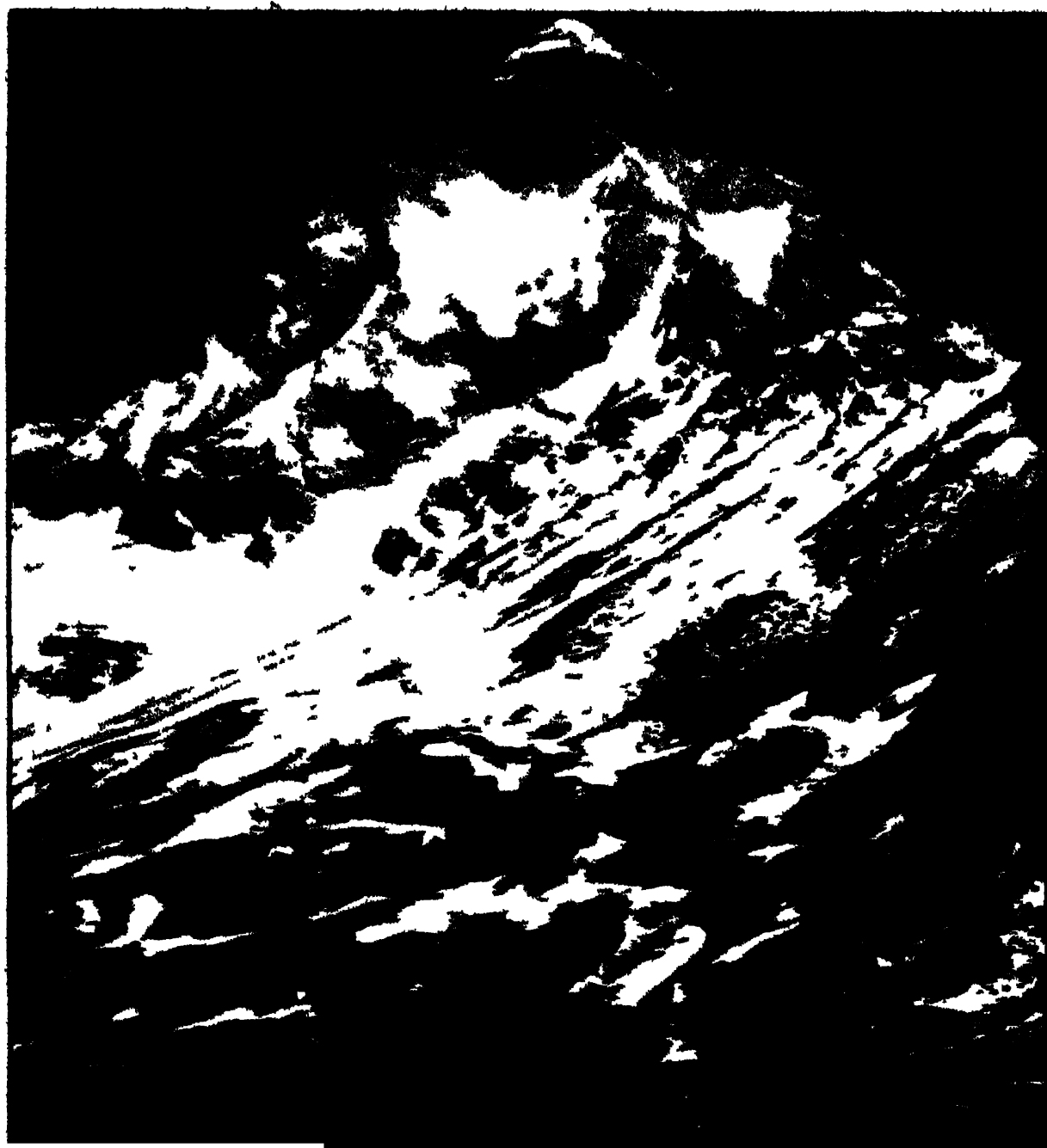
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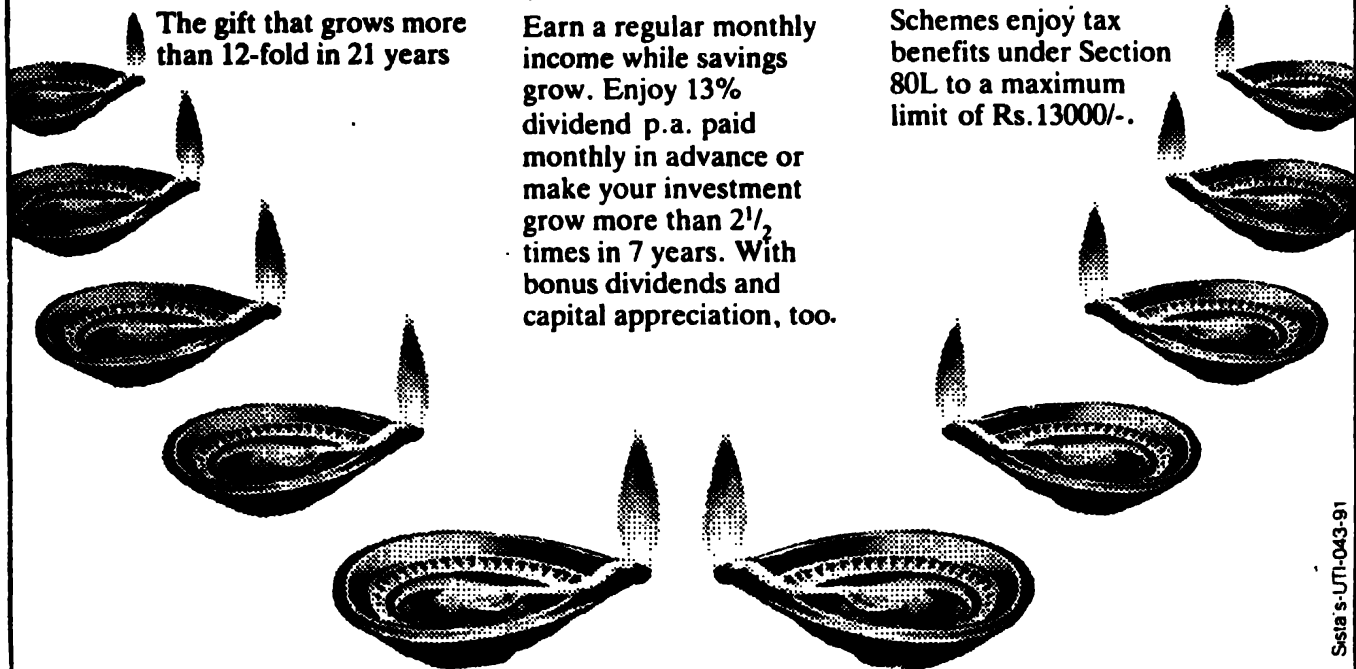
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Prabuddha Bharata

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NOVEMBER 1991

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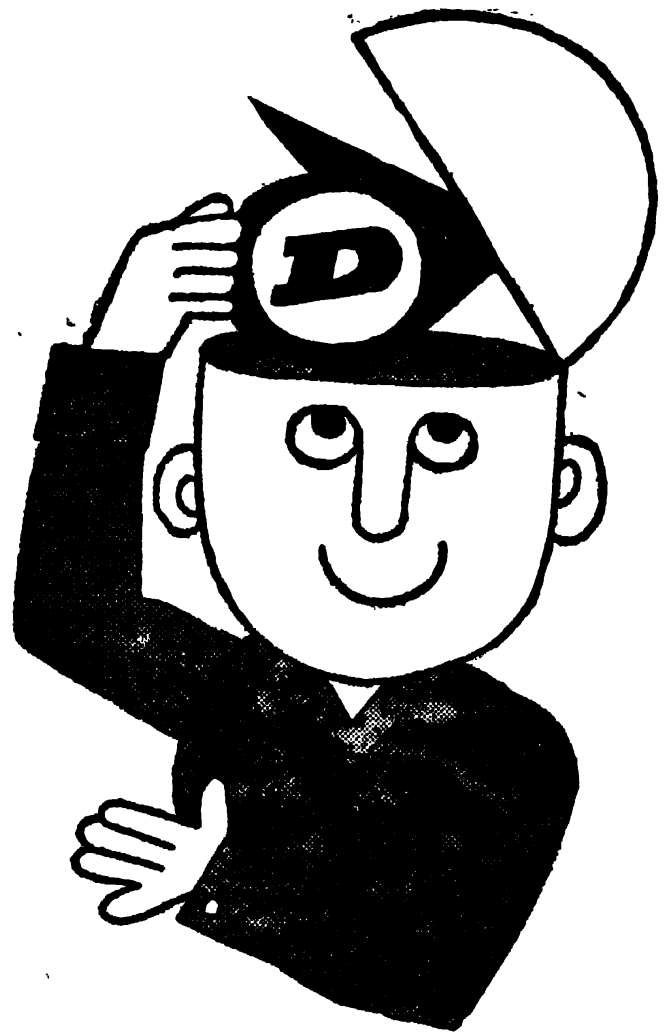
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The Lord, O Arjuna, dwells in the hearts of all beings, causing all beings by His Maya, to revolve, (as if) mounted on a machine.

—Gita, VIII. 61

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A Well Wisher

Vanished from off the face of the earth, with not even a tale left behind to tell, gone is that ancient land of the Greeks. There was time when the Roman Eagle floated over everything worth having in this world; everywhere Rome's power was felt and pressed on the head of humanity; the earth trembled at the name of Rome. But the Capitoline Hill is a mass of ruins, the spider weaves its web where the Caesars ruled. There have been other nations equally glorious that have come and gone, liveing a few hours of exultant and of exuberant dominance, and of a wicked national life, and then vanishing like ripples on the face of the waters. Thus have these nations made their mark on the face of humanity. But we live; and if Manu came back today he would not be bewildered, and would not find himself in a foreign land. The same laws are here, laws adjusted and thought out through thousands and thousands of years; customs, the outcome of the acumen of ages and the experience of centuries, that seem to be eternal; and as the days go by, as blow after blow of misfortune has been delivered upon them, they seem to have served one purpose only, that of making them stronger and more constant.

Did you ever hear of a country, where the greatest kings tried to trace their descent, not to kings, not to robber-barons living in old castles, who plundered poor travellers, but to semi-naked sages who lived in the forest?... This is the land. I am one of the proudest men ever born, but let me tell you frankly, it is not for myself, but on account of my ancestry. The more I have studied the past, the more I have looked back, more and more has this pride come to me, and it has given me the strength and courage of conviction, raised me up from the dust of the earth, and set me working out that great plan laid out by those great ancestors of ours. Children of those ancient Aryans, through the grace of the Lord may you have the same pride, may that faith in your ancestors come into your blood, may it become a part and parcel of your lives, may it work towards the salvation of the world!

—Swami Vivekananda

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Prabuddha Bharata

Arise! Awake!
And stop not till the Goal is reached.

VOL. 96

NOVEMBER 1991

No. 11

The Divine Message

We are always making this mistake in judging others ; we are always inclined to think that our little mental universe is all that is ; our ethics, our morality, our sense of duty, our sense of utility, are the only things that are worth having. The other day when I was going to Europe, I was passing through Marseilles, where a bull-fight was being held. All the Englishmen in the steamer were mad with excitement, abusing and criticising the whole thing as cruel. When I reached England, I heard of a party of prize-fighters who had been to Paris, and were kicked out unceremoniously by the French, who thought prize-fighting very brutal. When I hear these things in various countries, I begin to understand the marvellous saying of Christ: "Judge not that ye be not judged." The more we learn, the more we find out how ignorant we are, how multiform and multi-sided is this mind of man. ...

The great error in all ethical systems, without exception, has been the failure of teaching the means by which man could refrain from doing evil. All the systems of ethics teach, "Do not steal!" Very good ; but why does a man steal? Because all stealing, robbing, and other evil actions, as a rule, have become automatic. The systematic robber, thief, liar, unjust man and woman, are all these in spite of themselves! It is really a tremendous psychological problem. We should look upon man in the most charitable light. It is not so easy to be good.

What are you but mere machines until you are free? Should you be proud because you are good? Certainly not. You are good because you cannot help it. Another is bad because he cannot help it. If you were in his position, who knows what you would have been?...

Practical psychology directs first of all its energies in controlling the unconscious, and we know that we can do it. Why? Because we know the cause of the unconscious is the conscious ; the unconscious thoughts are the submerged millions of our old conscious thoughts, old conscious actions become petrified—we do not look at them, do not know them, have forgotten them. But mind you, if the power of evil is in the unconscious, so also is the power of good. We have many things stored in us as in a pocket. We have forgotten them, do not even think of them. ...True psychology would, therefore, try to bring them under the control of the conscious. The great task is to revive the whole man, as it were, in order to make him the complete master of himself. ...Everyone without exception, everyone of us, can attain to this culmination of Yoga. But it is a terrible task. If a person wants to attain to this truth, he will have to do something more than to listen to lectures and take a few breathing exercises. Everything lies in the preparation. ...

—Swami Vivekananda: CW, II 24-37

Prophet of Peace And Unity

A royal child was born in the garden of Lumbini. The child came forth from the womb like a rising sun, bright and perfect. All the worlds were flooded with light. The music of the celestials rang through the air and the angels rejoiced with gladness. The cries of the beasts were hushed; all malevolent beings received loving impulses in the heart and peace reigned on earth.

There was at that time in the grove a *ṛṣi*, leading the life of a hermit. He was Asita, a Brahmana of a dignified mien, famed not only for wisdom and scholarship, but also for his skill in the interpretations of signs. And the King invited him to see the royal child.

The Seer, beholding the prince wept and deeply sighed. And when the king saw the tears of Asita he became alarmed and asked: "Why has sight of my son caused thee grief and pain?" Asita addressed the king, "Banish all anxiety and doubt. The spiritual omens manifested indicated that the child now born will bring deliverance to the whole world. Recollecting now that I am old, on that account I could not hold my tears; for my end is coming on. But this son of thine will rule the world. He is born for the sake of all that lives." The new-born royal infant was Siddhartha.

Another divine child was born in the latter part of the fifteenth century, in a mud-built house. Light flashed. Angels and celestial beings burst into rapturous song. Beasts and birds and trees rejoiced. Blooming flowers danced and heralded the auspicious day. Bliss filled the hearts of people of that small village. Daultan, the Muslim midwife was spellbound to behold the radiant

new-born babe. She was much more perplexed when she heard the child laugh. Its laughter resembled that of a grown-up person of wisdom. The extraordinary portents brought great joy to the anxious father. He rushed to the house of the family priest, who was also a skilled astrologer, to know the future of his son. Pandit Hardyál came to cast the horoscope. He listened to an account of the unusual events that foretold the advent of a great soul. He was all agog to see the child. The mother protested exposing the infant to the chillness of the weather, but her solicitous apprehensions were overruled and the child was brought out in swaddling clothes. The instant the Pandit's eyes beheld the luminous face of the child, he paid his homage with folded hands and told the father that his son would forever live under an umbrella of spiritual sovereignty.

He further spoke, "Both Hindus and Muslims will worship him; his name, Nanak, will resound both on the earth and in heaven. The ocean will give him way; so will the earth and skies. He will worship and acknowledge One God and teach others to do so. Every creature he will consider as God's creation. But, O blessed father, this will be my grief, that I may not live to see the glory that will be his. Who knows how long I shall live?"

Like *Ṛṣi* Asita, Pandit Hardyál was deeply affected by the thought that he would not be able to witness the *līlā* and divine sport of the holy child, destined to be friend and protector of all living beings, and usherer-in of an era of love and light.

— Though born in an obscure village, son of

humble parentage. Nanak grew mighty in spiritual stature, conquering the hearts of innumerable people by his purity, equanimity, intense love of God, and limitless compassion for the lowly and the oppressed. Before his divine presence, gentleness, and spiritual wisdom, ego, pride and prejudice of hypocrites evaporated like thin mist. Nor could divisions of caste, class and religious bigotry stand in the presence of his radiant personality. He spoke and acted like one possessed of the power of God. His words were like shafts of light. They illumined the dense fog of nescience in men and revealed the same shining soul of divinity in all beings—One God residing in all hearts. To establish the unity of mankind—one global family, he came. He accomplished the mammoth task smilingly. Mankind has been grateful to this saint, though unfortunately, it forgets him now and then, and the wisdom he imparted, and finds itself in throes of sorrow, grief and turmoil.

The small, inconspicuous village consisted of low-roofed mud houses. The only imposing structure was the mansion of the landlord of the place. Inhabitants were both Hindus and Muslims and an affectionate bond of relationship existed between them. The pastoral scene was dotted with the patches of green wheat and gram fields. A dense forest served as a protective enclosure to the tiny village. All the cattle were taken to the forest for grazing. Like any other place in north India this village also was subject to an extremely rigorous climate—freezing cold winters and hot dusty summers. Spring, though short-lived, was another zesty season. The child Nanak grew healthily and happy in such an environment, and in a home of simplicity and austerity, imbibing the beauty and vigour of nature. His deep meditations in the woods and his transcendental insights found creative expression in poetic outpourings of his heart. His many

songs deeply inspired reflected the imagery drawn from boyhood impressions. The lively and affectionate nature of the boy endeared him to all. The well-defined trait of his character was that even at tender age he longed to retire into solitary places and be immersed in deep meditation on God. He would become oblivious of his surroundings. Everyone took notice of the charming qualities of the boy. *Maharban Janamsakhi*, which contains his biography, states:

“A Hindu chancing to pass by would involuntarily exclaim: ‘Great is Govinda, the Lord! Such a small child, yet he speaks so auspiciously. His words are as immaculate as he is comely. He is the image of God Himself.’

And if a Muslim saw him, he would remark with equal enthusiasm:

‘Wonderful is Thy creation, Merciful Master! How good-looking is the child and how tender is his speech! Talking to him brings one such satisfaction. He is a noble one, blessed of the Almighty Allah.’”

The Hindu family belonging to the Kshatriya caste, from across the River Ravi, near the city of Amritsar, came and settled in the village of Talwandi. A small village forty miles south-west of Lahore, Kalyan Chand and his family came here to live in the domain of the landlord Rai Bular. Kalyan Chand kept the rent records of Rai Bular. In addition, he had his own small landholding to tend along with a few cattle. He and his wife Tripta, though not wealthy, led a contented pious life. In this pious family of humble parents Nanak the spiritual giant was born on April 15, 1469. The little known village later became a holy place of pilgrimage, assuming the new name of Nanakana Sahib.

Nanak from his early age knew the mission and purpose for which he was born. Even in his boyhood, like Sri Ramakrishna, he

would go into ecstasy. His indrawn nature was the cause of anxiety to his parents. Father Kalyan Chand, or Kalu as he was popularly known, had worldly ambitions for his only son. The boy after completion of his education would one day take up his father's place as the *Patawari*—record keeper. He was sent to school to learn Punjabi and Sanskrit. The boy soon mastered the alphabets and reading and writing. At school one day Nanak filled both sides of his slate with a composition he made up. The teacher was astounded to find an acrostic, the verses of which were written to match the letters of the alphabet. It was Nanak's first profound composition in Punjabi, a teaching in verse-form. It is preserved in the *Guru Granth*. The young saint in this poem pondered on the question, "Who is truly learned?—*He who unravels divine knowledge is the real pandit.*" About the vanity of book-learning, Sri Ramakrishna also said, "That knowledge which purifies the mind and heart alone is true knowledge; all else is only negative knowledge."

Nanak continued to attend school for some time. The teacher's attempts, however, to teach the marvellously gifted boy something about keeping accounts and posting ledgers and striking balances went awry. These were necessary for the young one who would inherit his father's vocation. Nanak left the school abruptly informing the dismayed master that he preferred the study of divine knowledge. He composed a splendid hymn and handed it to his tutor:

*Make thy ink by burning worldly
attachment and pounding the ashes
to powder.*

*Let pure mind be thy paper, make love
thy pen;*

And write as thy Guru instructs.

Write thou His name and His praises.

*Write that He is without limit,
fathomless.*

Sri Ramakrishna also suddenly stopped attending school while he was quite young. It became apparent to his watchful eyes that school existed only to instil worldly-mindedness into its pupils, making them eager to acquire possessions and fame. All such learning seemed to him to be delusory and barren.

Dejected, Kalu was at his wit's end. Still clinging to a slender hope, he sent the spiritually inclined boy to Pandit Brijnath Shastri to learn religious texts. The boy stayed, but only long enough to gain proficiency in Sanskrit and classical lore. He refused to pursue studies further. But he did master Persian and Arabic under the tutelage of Qutb-ud-Din, a Muslim *maulvi* of the village. In his subsequent sublime verses, Nanak then used Persian, Arabic, Punjabi and Sanskrit words profusely, though he preferred, like Buddha, to use the patois for the sake of the common people.

Nanak retired frequently to the nearby forest and lost himself in spiritual practices. There he sought the company of the ascetics and anchorites and discussed with them on matters of esoteric wisdom and different schools of thought. He thus became well-versed, not only with ancient traditions, but also got acquainted with the ideas of contemporary saints and reformers. Regardful of his son's apathy towards secular learning and his unwillingness to take up any vocation for his livelihood, Kalu Chand asked him to tend the cattle. The father, limited by the vision of his little world and its duties, failed to understand the immense depth of his son and his noble mission.

Says the *Janamsakhi*, while out with the cattle one day Nanak fell into deep trance, and the wandering cattle grazed into the cultivated fields of a neighbouring farmer. The enraged man remonstrated, but Nanak said that God would bless the field. The

farmer was not pacified by such an impractical pious wish, and complained to the village chief. The chief sent his own men to estimate the loss. On their return they reported that they had seen that not one blade of the crop had been trampled or eaten. Their report was found to be true. A shrine now stands in that place and it is known as Kiara Sahib.

Like Buddha, Nanak too was something of a rebel child of existing society. Though obedient and humble in other ways, Nanak defied conventions followed blindly or ignorantly. His parents made elaborate arrangements for his initial ceremony or *upanayana*, in which a boy is taught *Gāyatrī* and gets invested with the sacred thread. But on the festive day Nanak refused the sacred thread or *janeu* in spite of the wishes and persuasions of his parents and elders. Addressing the priest he spontaneously recited the following verses:

*Let compassion be thy cotton!
Spin it into the yarn of contentment.
Give it knots of continence
and the twist of truth.
It will be neither burned nor lost;
Blest is the man, O Nanak,
who goeth with such a thread about
his neck!*

Kalu Chand had a suspicion that his son was mentally deranged. Mother Tripta also reproached him for his idleness. She advised him to be active and work for his livelihood and stop weaving impractical songs. She also told him that she was pained to hear that people were calling her son mad. But the admonition did not have the desired impact. Rather Nanak became more unfit for all secular occupation and his notorious idleness became a source of anxiety to his parents. Kalu Chand approached him and told that he required assistance in the cultivation of the land, and Nanak was now of

an age to turn his mind to agriculture. Nanak composed a hymn on the occasion:

*Make body the field,
The mind the ploughman,
Honest labour the irrigating water.
Sow the seeds of the Lord's name.
Let contentment be the leveller,
And humility the fence—
With deeds of love the seed will
germinate.*

Nanak told his father that he had sown his own field and the harvest was ready.

When this entreaty also failed to induce his son and draw him out, Kalu thought to engage Nanak in business. He gave him twenty silver rupees to invest profitably in a business and open a shop. When Nanak was sent to buy goods from the market nearby, however, he gave away all the money to holy men and the poor on the way, saying to himself that there could be no truer trade than feeding the hungry mouths and clothing the naked bodies. "One who has established in God sees Him in all beings."¹ Not unnaturally, the father spoke to him in the harshest terms and sent him to Sultanpur where his daughter Nanaki resided with her husband Jairam. Jairam, using his influence with the local Nawab, got Nanak employed as a storekeeper in a granary. At the age of eighteen, Nanak was married to Sulakhni and had two sons, Sri Chand and Lakhmidas.

Neither marriage nor his service under the Nawab did shake the young sage from his spiritual moorings. He had reached such a high state of God-intoxication that the worldly events of pain and pleasure, fortune and misfortune, did not have any power to touch him. He was in the same state which he described as 'the state of the *Brahma-jñāni*'.

उरिषरै जो अंतरि नामु ।
सरब मै ऐखै भगवानु ॥

*The brahmajñāni looks upon friend and
foe with equal vision,
Like the breeze which blows on the rich
and poor alike...
He is the purest of the pure,
Like the water which knows no
pollution...
Alike he looks on friends and foes,
and is free from pride.²*

Even in work at Modikhana—stores, Nanak's mind constantly dwelt on God. While weighing out rations he would go into ecstasy, repeating the figure of *tera* or thirteen—which means 'thine'. "*Thine, Thine, all is Thine, O Lord,*" he would rapturously say again and again. He used to keep a small portion of provisions which he received as salary for his own maintenance, and the rest he gave to the poor. He sang, "Saints always act for the welfare of others."³ Many earnest souls, attracted by his purity, humility and heavenly charm, thronged to the humble home of Nanak. Early hours of the morning and nights were spent in singing the praises of the Lord. The famous Muslim minstrel, Mardana, came from Talwandi and stayed with the Master. He played on the *rebeck*, a stringed instrument, while Nanak sang his soul-stirring *sabads*. During his many years stay at Sultanpur, Nanak had been waiting for the command from the Most High to enter upon his global mission to spread the name of One God, and usher in an era of peace and unity in the world.

That auspicious day arrived. One day as usual Nanak went to the river Bein for his

morning ablutions, but did not return home for three days. People thought he had been drowned in the river. But on the third day he did appear. The interval had been an indescribable mystical experience. He had direct vision of God and God commanded His son to set forth on a noble mission. Nanak's heart overflowed with compassion for all beings; it expanded and embraced the whole world. He lost every vestige of his old individuality and became a fit vehicle of infinite consciousness. In that blissful state Nanak recited a prayer which formed the preamble to *The Japji*, an opening text of the *Guru Granth*:

*There is only One God. He is the
Supreme Being. Only His name is true.
He is the creator of all life and matter.
He was in the beginning, He was in all
ages. The true One is, was, O Nanak, and
shall forever be.*

He came home and distributed all he had to the poor.⁴ When people asked him where he had been and what he had found, he answered: "*Na koi Hindu; na koi Mussalman—There is no Hindu; there is no Mussalman.*" People could not understand the cosmic vision of the Great Soul, for with mind merged in the universal consciousness of God, all such divisions as between man and woman, high and low, Hindu and Muslim ceased to have any meaning. How could he see anything other than the Supreme Spirit?⁴ He only knew that beyond *Māyā*, in that stainless pure consciousness—"So'ham—I am All", and that from the standpoint of Soul there are no divisions among living beings.⁵ His statement, though an inoffensive statement, created a sensation in the town. The Qazi, the expounder of

2. ब्रह्म गिआनि कै दृसटि सनानि ।
जैसे राज रंक कउ लागै तुलि पवान ॥
ब्रह्म गिआनि निरमलु ते निरमला ।
जैसे मैलु न लागै जला ॥
ब्रह्म गिआनि कै मित्र सत्रु समानि ।
ब्रह्म गिआनि कै नाही अभिमान ॥
3. प्रभु कउ सिमरहि से परउपकारी ।

4. किसनो कहिए नानका सभुकिछु बापे आवि ।

5. तनु निरंजनु जोति सबई सोहं भेदु न

कोई जीउ ।

Muslim law, summoned the saint to the Nawab's presence to have his explanation. The Nawab, however, having realized the greatness of Nanak, showed him due respect.

Time came now for the Muslim afternoon prayer. All arose, including Nanak, and entered the mosque. As the Qazi led in the service, Nanak remained standing, and did not kneel to pray. Infuriated, Qazi complained to the Nawab. Nanak said, "What prayer was I expected to join? Qazi's prayer was not accepted by God. While he was pretending to pray his mind was constantly occupied with the thought of a newborn foal, which he has loosed in the yard before coming to the mosque. He remembered that there was a well in the enclosure, and his mind was filled with apprehension lest the young animal fall into it." He said to the Nawab, "While you were praying, your mind was thinking of purchasing horses in Kabul." Both admitted the truth of Nanak's words. Then the Qazi asked, "Who then is a true Muslim?" Nanak recited the following *shabad*:

*If compassion be thy mosque,
faith thy prayer mat,
And honest labour thy Quoran...
Let good deeds be thy Kaaba
and Truth thy Prophet,
And thy prayer be for God's grace.*

The Nawab so deeply moved by Nanak's grace and wisdom that he fell at his feet. All the assembled Muslims accepted that God spoke through Nanak.

At the age of twenty-seven, in 1496, Guru Nanak left Sultanpur to deliver his message to the strife-torn world. For the next about thirty years as a wandering friar he covered the length and breadth of India, and even abroad healing countless bereaved hearts with spiritual wisdom, now and then exposed the vanity of priests and mullas, and inundated the land with peace, love and kindness. With him went his faithful rebeck-player,

Mardana. He went about, for some time, in Punjab, winning Hindus and Muslims alike to his view of the unity of man and the glory of God's name. He established missionary centres which he left in the charge of his devout followers, many of whom belonged to the low castes and had practically nothing to call their own. Uncountable were his wondrous deeds of kindness and compassion. Paying his tribute to Nanak, Vivekananda at Lahore said, "Here it was that in later times the gentle Nanak preached his marvellous love for the world. Here it was that his broad heart was opened and his arms outstretched to embrace the whole world, not only of Hindus, but Mohammedans too."⁶

During his wanderings he came upon a beautiful placid lake in the forests of the Punjab. So captivated was he by the beauty of the spot that for some days he stayed there in meditation. Guru Arjun, Nanak's successor, constructed in 1589 a shrine inside the lake. It is the present famous Golden Temple of Amritsar. From there Nanak reached Saidpur and put up at the poorest house of a low-caste carpenter, Lalo by name, and thus invited the wrath of high class Hindus. There are several instances when Sri Ramakrishna also, guided by the spirit within, snubbed the proud and rich to give his blessings to the humble and poor in spirit.

Malik Bhago, a rich Hindu official of Saidpur, arranged a great feast, and invited all the people of the town, including Guru Nanak. But the Guru refused to attend. Malik sent his footmen to bring Nanak to his presence by force. When they did so, and he arrived at the place, Malik spoke to him, "Today the entire town is feasting here in my house. How is it that you ignored my invitation and eat with a *shudra*?"

6. Swami Vivekananda, *Complete Works* (Calcutta; Advaita Ashrama) Vol 3, p. 366.

Nanak replied, "In your delicacies is the blood of the poor, while the coarse bread of Lalo, who earns by the sweat of his brow, is sweet like milk." To demonstrate the truth of what he had said, Nanak had the bread brought from Lalo's house. He took a little of it in his right hand, and some of the rich man's food in his left. As he pressed both, milk dropped from Lalo's bread and blood from Malik's food. Lalo became the first emissary of the Sikh faith. At Tulamba town, Nanak transformed a thug-brigand and asked him to distribute his ill-gotten gains to the poor and devote the rest of his life to the prayerful repetition of God's name.

Guru Nanak's wanderings took him to Kurukshetra, Delhi, Vrindavan, Gaya, Ayodhya, Varanasi, and Hardwar. In Hardwar he told orthodox Brahmins that defilement came from within, not from without. He sang a hymn:

*The real pariahs are the evil thoughts—
cruelty, slander and wrath.*

*Let Truth, self-restraint and good acts be
your rites, and your ablutions the
remembrance of His name!*

In Prayag he was asked to take a dip in the river to wash away his sins. He said, "By bathing the body in the river? How will that cleanse the heart of its impurity? They are truly pure in whose hearts dwells the Lord." In Gaya, Nanak told the congregation, "What is the use of mechanically taking God's name, austerities, fasting, and worship if there is a thought of selfishness in the heart?"⁷ On his way back, Nanak halted at Puri. He was invited to attend the *Arati* in the famous temple of Jagannath. During the service the Guru stood silent and did not participate in the ceremony. When

he was asked the reason, he burst into a song of unmatched beauty:

*The sky is the salver,
the sun and moon, the lamps.
The luminous stars in the heavens are
the pearls.
The fragrant breeze from the Malaya is
the incense;
The winds are the fans for Thee,
And the vast forests wreaths of flowers
Thy holy offering;
Thus is Thy worship performed!*

This song was a favourite of Swamiji's. He used to sing it now and then. According to some, at Puri, Nanak met Sri Chaitanya and these two great souls stayed together for many days.

Walking from village to village, bearing all hardships with a smile and equanimity, the Guru discussed with Sufi, Jain, Buddhist saints and gave his wisdom and also learned from them. He travelled to Sri Lanka, then to Tibet, Ladakh, and Manasarovar. He also went to Mecca, Medina, Baghdad and Afghanistan. In Mecca he said, "In God's court, no one was accepted as Hindu or Mussalman. By our acts we shall be judged." After many years he returned to Punjab. Saidpur was attacked and plundered by Babar in 1520. Nanak was heart-broken to see the devastation and sad plight of the ravaged city. He implored piteously the Lord:

*When there was such suffering, killing,
such shrieking in pain,
Didst not Thou, O God, feel pity?...
Thou alone makest and Thou alone
severest!*

He was taken prisoner by Babar's army. When Babar learnt the greatness of the Saint, however, he not only released him but paid his homage. The Guru advised Babar, "Deliver just judgements, reverence holy men, forswear wine and gambling. The monarch who indulges in these vices shall,

7. किया जपु किया तपु किया व्रत पूजा ।

जाके रिदै भाउ है दूजा ॥

if he survives, bewail his misdeeds. Be merciful to the vanquished, and worship God in spirit and in truth."

At last Nanak settled down at a village, Kartarpur, a place founded by himself. His disciples followed. The days were spent in *kirtan*, preaching, meditation and community work. He tilled the land to provide for himself and his family. He always laid emphasis on true fellowship, equality and ethical conduct. According to Nanak, a seeker was expected to live in the world, engage himself in useful activity, adhering to his moral obligations, and become an active agent in promoting collective well-being of society. *Kirat karni, wand chakna, nam japo*—To earn one's living by honest labour, to share with others the fruit of exertion, and to repeat the name of God, was the quintessence of the Guru's teaching.⁸

Nanak's sublime hymns were to counter the prevailing confusion and moral crises in society of his time. Hindus were burdened with many castes ; so were the Muslims with many sects. Squabbles, intolerance, persecution and hypocrisy vitiated the normal life of society. For Hindus and Muslims, religion consisted only of external observances. Kindness, sympathy and purity, being the true spirit of religion, were nowhere to be seen. Priests and Mullas misled the common people by telling them that the lifeless outward observances were ends in themselves. Observing such a low ebb of spirituality in the country, Nanak commented :

Fools pass for learned ones, sophistry for wisdom,

And everyone seeks for nothing but pelf.

The life work of the Guru was to cleanse such society. He sacrificed himself to this formidable task with every drop of his blood, the sweat of his brow and every ounce of his energy. He protested oppression of

every kind, whether it was religious or political. But that protest did not injure or humiliate anyone. His way was full of gentleness, kindness and love. The Guru embodied in himself all the spiritual qualities. Gentleness and humility were the natural traits of his personality. Therefore he used to say: "The lowly among the lowliest am I—the lowliest of all." In our times, Sri Ramakrishna stood as a perfect example of this. Did he not even clean the privy of pariahs with his long locks to humble his caste-pride ? Nanak had no curses on his lips ; his lips pronounced only blessings. He never condemned anyone, but lifted everyone to the realm of the Spirit, to their innate divinity.⁹

Before he laid down his body, on September 7, 1539, his parting *shabad* to the congregation was :

"The affairs of this world are transitory, only of a four-days' existence. ...We must proceed certainly like a guest ; why should we be proud ? Profitable is their advent into the world who have meditated with their whole hearts upon God."

The sacred land on which the Noble One shed his blood to spawn peace, unity and harmony, the same land is now drenched with the blood of innocent people by extremists. Not a word issued from the lips of the Guru, nor even a single act of his, caused the slightest hurt to any being. Taking his name, a few hundred lunatics wield deadly weapons to destroy human life wantonly and loot property—what an unprecedented tragic irony ! If they dare look at the serene, loving, and divine face of Nanak, or read a single saying of his, they would be ashamed of their dark deeds, nay, their own destructive lives. O Nanak, the merciful one, restore good sense in these people and stem this carnage !

⁸. किरत करो, बंड छको, नाम जपो ।

⁹. बटि बटि पूरन ब्रह्म प्रगास ।

Developing An Integrated Personality*

SWAMI BHUTESHANANDA

It's important to know life fundamentally for spiritual unfoldment. Then our lives become integrated and wholesome. Uncareful frittering away of life's precious energies leads to emptiness and sorrow. These are the counsels of the Revered President Maharaj of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission in his impromptu discourse.

There is a big grazing land. A cow is feeding there on very good grass. For the moment the cow seems to be happy and contented. But soon afterwards, it likes to have the grass that is near another cow. And that grass is not as good as the first grass it was eating. But it pursues that grass of the other cow and loses the former good grass for nothing! That is how efforts become frustrated.

Our energies are being scattered in all directions. We live without any fixed purpose ; that is just like living the life of an animal. An animal's life is lived in the senses, and every moment its aim changes. Our efforts in life are always being frustrated owing to our negligence about cultivating the sort of integrated personality and character with which we can pursue one abiding aim in life, and for the attainment of which our whole energy will have to be directed.

By 'personality' we mean our individuality and our outlook on life. It is the result of our learning and experiences in our early life ; and it can be judged by how we try to be a part and parcel of the world, and how we behave in the world. An integrated personality will be a personality that will show at every stage of life adherence to one great idea, or supreme ideal, and all other smaller ideas will be subsidiary or subordinate to that supreme one.

* Based on a talk given at Gwalior on 6th April 1987.

The Need For Integration of Personality

Not all personalities are always integrated. This is because the personality that we develop is not a methodically constructed one. As we think, so we behave ; as is our objective, so do we live our lives! If we reflect over our past, we find that in the stages of childhood, we did not have definite objectives, aims, or training. At one moment we sought something, at another moment something else. A child's mind always wavers like that. It is fickle. It has not developed any sort of stable personality yet. As children, what were we seeking ? Perhaps, some sweet things to eat and some kind words from our elders. That was all. There were no other objectives. But as we grew up, our choices became different, our desires became different and our efforts to arrive at the fulfilment of those desires too became very different. Now, we are not merely satisfied with the desires of a child, wanting only things to eat and toys to play with. We require more lasting things to be with us. We require status in society, we require appreciation from our peers, we want respect from our subordinates, and we want to be above the other members of the group. That is the idea that gradually grows up in our mind, even as we grew up physically. But even with all this development, our personality has not become fully integrated. Our hopes and efforts are often frustrated. This is because we are not trying to concentrate our energies—have not dedicated

our life—to one supreme objective. If we do not retain memory of, or live for the attainment of some higher purpose—some higher goal—our lives become gradually hollow. Our time is spent in different aimless pursuits and we have, no proper understanding of their relative importance in relation to the supreme goal of our life.

It is sometimes seen that a man who lived a successful early life feels toward the end of his life that his years have been wasted. The reason is, what he thought to be the objective then, what he thought to be the aim of his life then, now seems merely child's play. When this happens to us, it means we are frittering away the precious time at our disposal. Time runs in an unalterably unilateral direction. It passes away, never to come back. The days of our life as children can be counted on the tips of our fingers. Then comes adulthood, when we are sufficiently grown up and are conscious of responsibilities. If we do not accept those responsibilities and do not try to fulfil them, we shall be counted as wastrels and misfits in society. We must therefore make it clear in our own minds what we want most to attain in life. That conviction should be there, and it should be properly deliberated upon and fixed on a rational basis.

People who live compulsively for one thing only are generally termed 'monomaniacs'. A monomaniac is obsessed with one idea only, and he is not able to behave with others in the way normal people do. Sometimes there is no door open for him through which he can communicate with others. That is, of course, the sign of a disordered personality. The monomaniac is fixated on some single idea that *commands* him and leads him to a collapse, whereas an integrated personality is a sound individual who gradually develops a confident faith in an ideal of life which he is able to strive for with his whole heart and soul. In

an integrated personality, ideas become more and more clear and stable as he matures, and he thinks of one supreme end of life as the Goal, and all other things take a secondary place.

Developing An Integrated Personality

Now, how to develop that integrated personality? Obviously that is a great quest. First of all, we shall have to consider life carefully. We shall have to consider all the different values and ideals in life and their relative importance in relation to each other. That is, some things should occupy only our passing interest. Some other things are more important and we should devote more energy for their fulfilment. And with all these, there should be one great and final objective in our life. We may not be completely clear in the beginning as to what that supreme goal should be, but we must always be thoughtful and have the faith that it will open up to us. Gradually we shall have that clear understanding ripened in us as we grow older and learn how to keep that supreme goal in the foremost place and keep other things in a supportive or subordinate place. Then we can strive for the highest. This is a very important decision which should be made by every person. It is not always that we make correct decisions from the very beginning. Our ideas may change, and our ultimate objective in life may not be clear right now, as was said earlier. But we should have some idea about how to proceed towards the goal.

The highest goal of our life, which should be rational and a real protective factor, should be sought by us in every step of our life. A life without an ideal is like a boat without a helm to direct its course. Without the helm, the boat will drift with the current and will never reach its point. If we are to reach a goal we cannot sit and wait for it to come to us. We shall have to direct our-

selves towards that. So also, a good character and personality has to be properly cultivated so that every moment of our existence may have a worthwhile result and purpose. A decision should be made by us, that we should not waste our time, but direct all our energies towards the attainment of life's goals. A man who can concentrate his energies from his very childhood and who has grown an integrated life and personality, is verily a lucky man. But then, unfortunately, all of us have not been so lucky.

The Four-fold Ideal

In ancient India, four ideals or objectives of life were clearly mentioned and discussed. They are: *dharma*, *artha*, *kāma* and *mokṣa*—religion, objects of enjoyment, desires, and liberation from all desires. These four have not all equal importance. According to the outlook in ancient times, *dharma* is the means for the attainment of all good things, here and hereafter.¹ The path that leads to supreme realization in the end is the path of *dharma*. If *dharma* is followed, the others—*artha* and *kāma*, lead one to *mokṣa*. *Dharma* also signifies our duties towards others—towards the people with whom we live. So far as being individuals is concerned, we are in a society and we live with others. There must be some sort of relationship between ourselves and our environment—a bond with the people with whom we live. We cannot live in this world in isolation. Our lives are always connected with the lives of those who are around us, and therefore we must always have a particular relation with them. What should be our attitude towards others? Those who are weak should have our protection; those who are elder should have our respect; and

service should be rendered by us to those who need it. The more we can give to others without reserve, the more we shall have the blessing of an integrated personality.

Artha and *kāma*^{*} are goals for a man seeking enjoyment. A man who is greedy and full of selfish desires (*kāma*) will want a world which will provide sufficient pleasures. But even such a man must seek enjoyment through *dharma* if he wants satisfaction. At last, the final goal is *mokṣa*, which means liberation from all desires, all ignorance, all limitations.

These different objectives in life, though all have a place, and all are important, sometimes seem to us to be conflicting and cause us to be bewildered. But a person who has no such conflict, who has carefully considered the whole life and the highest overriding important objective, need not have any bewilderment. Though life may be long, he will keep in his inmost corner the thing of greatest value and not allow smaller pursuits to overshadow that one. He will be persistent in striving for the highest goal. That is certainly a better utilization of one's personality.

The Way To The Highest

Our ancient *ṛṣis* saw the ideal life divided into four successive stages or periods. First, the period of early life and *brahmacharya*. It is the preparatory and formative period when the young person attends his studies and practises restraint of the senses and purity. In the early days this period was completed by about the twenty-fifth year. The next twenty-five years were devoted to living the life of the ideal householder (*gārhasthya*). Marrying and raising his children, the householder lived a life of restraint and fulfilled his duties in such a way as to prepare himself for the higher pursuits of the next stage. He entered the

1. यतोऽभ्युदयनिःश्रेयससिद्धिः स धर्मः ।

third period, *vānaprastha*, the life of retirement and seclusion. There comes a time in every life when one should retire from the busy life of worldly concerns and devote oneself to the higher values, namely, the attainment of God, or liberation from ignorance. So, one will have to gradually train oneself to be dissociated from earlier lower pursuits.² The householder's pursuits are quite different from those of a *vānaprasthi*. The latter has to keep himself away from the old habits and old environment and live apart to some extent from society to try to attain inner illumination. Last of all he becomes prepared for *sannyāsa*, the ultimate stage of life when everything is renounced for the sake of realizing the abiding principle, which is eternal peace, eternal happiness, eternal joy, and more importantly, eternal knowledge and eternal existence.

We all want to be immortal. Perhaps we do not know that we cannot be immortal physically. We are trying to lengthen our lifespan more and more. We are never ready to forego the limited pleasures of the physical existence. So, we try to live as long a

२. ब्रह्मचर्यं परिसमाप्य गृही भवेत्, गृही भूत्वा वनी भवेत्, वनी भूत्वा प्रव्रजेत् । यदि वेतरथा ब्रह्मचर्यं प्रव्रजेत् गृहाद् वा वनाद् वा ।

Jabālopaniṣad, verse 4

life as possible. But it has never been given to man to have eternal life in the senses, in the physical body. Whatever is an assemblage of different component parts must one day disintegrate; it will have to come to an end necessarily. There is no escape from that. But there is a state which is abiding, and will never come to an end, and that is the state that we want ourselves to be in. But we can have only that kind of immortality which is spiritual. It is not physical. It is the immortality of the undying Self within, our true personality. It is not limited to the body, it is not bound to the senses, it is not merely a stage of existence. It is Existence Itself—*Sat-cit-ānanda*. We are all pursuing It—that perfect fulfilment, either knowingly or unknowingly. Our motive really is that, though we are often unaware of the true meaning of it.

This is a conviction and faith that a person should learn from the early stages of his life, this faith in the spiritual goal of life. The sooner it is developed, the better; and the more we concentrate our energies on that, the more do we advance nearer the Goal we shall one day be. That is why we stress the importance and predominance of one ultimate goal over the temporary ones.

To attain this perfect integration in life, this state of eternal existence, knowledge and bliss, we shall have to give up our selfishness. For selfishness is the main disintegrating factor in life.

It is much better to work, keeping the mind fixed, without letting it wander about. The mind creates trouble whenever it is let loose.

—Holy Mother

The Ramakrishna Mission—What It Stands For*

SWAMI GAHANANANDA

Friends,

I have been asked to speak about the Ramakrishna Mission. I would like to speak mainly about what the Ramakrishna Mission stands for, that is, about its ideals.

But, before taking up that subject I wish to clear up two points. One is about the word "Mission". In the Christian religion the word "Mission" means an organization which sends missionaries to foreign countries to convert people to their faith. The Ramakrishna Mission is not a "Mission" of this type. Because our aim is not to convert people to any particular religion. In our case "Mission" simply means "organized social service done in a spirit of worship of the Divine-in-all beings", that is all.

As you can see from my dress, I am a monk. Swami Jyotirupananda also is a monk like me, though he is dressed like you. We belong to a monastic order known as the Ramakrishna Math or Order. It consists exclusively of monks only. The Ramakrishna Mission is an association in which some of our monks and some lay people work in cooperation to render social service. Though the Ramakrishna Mission has lay people, mostly married citizens, as its members, its administration is controlled entirely by the monks of the Ramakrishna Order. The distinction between the Order and the Mission is not widely known. So the word Ramakrishna Mission is popularly used to mean both. I would like to give you an idea of the activities of these two institutions.

* Edited version of a talk given in Leningrad on 14-8-91 by Swami Gahanananda, General Secretary of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission.

The Headquarters of both the Ramakrishna Order and the Ramakrishna Mission are at a place known as Belur Math in Calcutta. The two organizations have together 154 branch centres, roughly half each. Of these, 34 centres are outside India. It is not only the Mission that is rendering social service. Some of the Ramakrishna Order's branch centres also undertake social service. The Order and the Mission together own 14 hospitals with more than 2,000 beds, and 81 out-patient dispensaries. Apart from these, we have what are called mobile dispensaries. A mobile dispensary is a well-equipped van which carries doctors and medical supplies to rural areas. We have 22 of them in different parts of India.

We are also active in the educational field. We run colleges, schools of different types, polytechnics, rural and agricultural institutes, orphanages, a blind boys' academy and so on—320 institutions in all. Apart from these, we also operate hundreds of non-formal education centres such as night schools etc. for very poor people in cities and villages.

We have special projects for the uplift of tribals. There are also cultural centres for children and adolescents. In India natural calamities like floods, cyclones, drought etc occur almost every year, and for these we organize massive relief and rehabilitation operations. We have a permanent department for this.

These are all physical or material forms of service. But our primary objective is the spiritual elevation of mankind. Even our physical service we do as a spiritual discipline. Everything we do is a spiritual discipline or yoga for us.

We cannot render service properly unless we make ourselves fit for it. As I told you, we belong to a monastic Order. Including the novices, we are about 1,300 strong, and the number is steadily increasing. We lead a disciplined life wedded to the vows of chastity and poverty. We follow a strict daily routine which includes prayer, meditation, congregational singing, studies and, of course, service. In each centre our monks and novices live like one large family. Unselfish love is the cord that unites us. It is because of this community support that we are able to render so much of social service so efficiently and effectively.

Well, I have been using the word “we” all along to mean the monks of the Ramakrishna Order. But apart from the monks, we have a large community of lay devotees. The lay devotees help and support the monks in various ways. Of course, this is something familiar to you. For you know that every church is supported by a community of lay people. But the lay devotees who are followers of Ramakrishna differ from the others in one important respect: they belong to all religions and faiths. We have not only Hindus of various denominations but also Christians, Muslims, Jews, Sikhs, Parsees, and followers of tribal cults as our lay devotees.

Then there are quite a number of independent Ashramas or retreat centres which do not belong to the Ramakrishna Mission. There may be not less than 500 of them in India. So you see, the Ramakrishna Mission is only one stream in a vast movement known as the Ramakrishna Movement. What is common to all the streams of this Movement is the life and message of Sri Ramakrishna.

And this Ramakrishna Movement is spreading. It is spreading not because we go about converting people to our faith. No, we don't do that. We do not even open new

centres at our initiative. As a rule, new centres are opened by local people; later on, they ask for affiliation to the Ramakrishna Mission. Each branch of the Ramakrishna Mission is financially independent and depends on local support. So then, if the Ramakrishna Movement is spreading, it is because its inner dynamic is derived from the universal significance of the life and message of Sri Ramakrishna. Who is this Sri Ramakrishna?

Sri Ramakrishna was born in 1836 in a poor priestly family in a remote village 110 kilometres to the north-west of Calcutta. His father had been a wealthy man, but because he refused to bear false witness on behalf of the powerful landlord of his village, he had been deprived of all his properties and had to migrate to another village where a friend offered him a small piece of land. Ramakrishna inherited this devotion to truth from his father. He had only rudiments of formal education. At the age of nineteen, poverty forced Ramakrishna to become a priest in the temple of the Divine Mother known as Kālī. But very soon he was seized with the desire to know whether God really existed and, if so, whether God could be realized through different paths. In Hinduism itself there are several spiritual paths, each belonging to a particular sect. Ramakrishna followed all these paths one by one. Then he tried the paths of Islam and Christianity. It needs tremendous effort for ordinary people to attain success in even a single path. But Ramakrishna, through sheer intensity of aspiration, realized the goal of each path in a very short time. He discovered that all these paths ultimately led to the experience of the same ultimate Reality known as Brahman, God and so on. From the results of these experiments Sri Ramakrishna formulated the principle of Harmony of Religions for which he is famous.

The principle of Harmony of Religions is based on four concepts developed by Sri Ramakrishna. These concepts are: first, direct realization of God is the essence of every religion; whereas temples, churches, rituals etc. are only secondary details. Second concept: all religions lead ultimately to the same goal. Third concept: though the goal is the same, the means are different; each religion or sect represents a unique path; and so there is no need to change one's religion. Fourth concept: these unique paths are not mutually contradictory but complementary. Every religion has some good points. A wise man accepts the good points of every religion and thus enriches himself. It is only ignorant people who quarrel and fight in the name of religion. This principle of the Harmony of Religions is one of the foundational principles of the Ramakrishna Movement.

Sri Ramakrishna also taught that God realization is the only way to attain supreme peace and fulfilment in life. And he openly declared that God realization was possible for all people, irrespective of caste, creed or race.

For the sake of higher spiritual realization, lower pleasures and material possessions are to be sacrificed. Sri Ramakrishna did not, however, advocate too much austerity. He favoured moderation. He did not live a mendicant life like the majority of Indian monks of his day. Rather, he lived the simple life of an average Indian, maintaining absolute purity of character. Sri Ramakrishna did not like the negative idea that man is a born sinner. He stressed the positive aspect of life such as faith, strength, etc.

Sri Ramakrishna had a cheerful disposition. His face always radiated joy—this is what almost everyone who saw him has reported. He had a keen sense of humour.

He never encouraged brooding over the past or depression of mind. These traits of the Master also characterize community life in Ramakrishna Mission centres. Anyone who visits our centres cannot fail to notice the atmosphere of cheerfulness, joy and humour there.

Sri Ramakrishna and his disciple Swami Vivekananda were both highly talented musicians. And music has always been a prominent aspect of our community life.

Sri Ramakrishna saw God in all people—even in wicked men and fallen women. He had a deep compassion for suffering humanity. This made him work incessantly for the welfare of people. Especially during the last few years of his life he had to meet and talk to a large number of people for hours with very little rest.

The universal significance of the life and message of Sri Ramakrishna became known to the world at large mainly through the efforts of his foremost disciple, Swami Vivekananda. His original name was Narendra. It was as a rational-minded 18-year-old college student, eager to know the ultimate Truth, that he first met Sri Ramakrishna. He practised spiritual disciplines under Sri Ramakrishna's guidance and attained the highest level of spiritual realization. After the Master's passing away, he organized the young disciples into a monastic brotherhood known as the Ramakrishna Math.

He spent a few years wandering all over India. In 1893, when he was barely 30 years old, he set sail for the United States of America to represent Hinduism at the World Parliament of Religions. After four years of preaching work he returned to India. Earlier, during his wanderings in India he had been deeply moved at the appalling poverty and ignorance of the poor Indian masses. It was mainly for their uplift

that he founded the Ramakrishna Mission in 1897. Swami Vivekananda passed away in 1902 a few months before his 40th birthday.

Vivekananda's contributions to the Ramakrishna Movement and monastic life in general are many. Here I wish to mention only three. The first is social commitment. Before Vivekananda came on the scene, the poor masses of India had been treated as social outcasts with none to support them. All the social and religious reformers of that period and earlier years were concerned only with the upper castes and classes of people. Swami Vivekananda was the first religious leader in India to become a spokesman for the downtrodden people of India. He was also the first leader in modern India to develop a practical means for the uplift of the poor masses. He saw that the renunciation and freedom from social obligation of the monks qualified them as ideal social workers, and that through them an immense amount of social service could be done. But, in order to motivate people, a religious philosophy was necessary, and Vivekananda found it in the Vedantic doctrine of the potential divinity of man. He converted Sri Ramakrishna's experience of seeing God in all people into the doctrine that service to man is the best form of worship of God. This has ever since remained the basic work ethic of the Ramakrishna Movement.

Another aspect of Swami Vivekananda's influence upon Ramakrishna Mission may be seen in its modern and progressive outlook. The buildings including temples are designed in the modern way with all modern amenities. Ramakrishna Mission monks work as doctors, teachers and engineers, keep audited accounts, read newspapers to be in touch with current events, use modern vehicles for travel, and use English as the link-language. The modernization has been effected mainly for the preservation of

ancient insights and values through adaptation.

Another aspect of Ramakrishna Mission monks' life which Swami Vivekananda introduced is the development of intellectual life. Our monks are encouraged to acquire knowledge of both eastern and western philosophies, world religions, scriptures and similar subjects. All our centres conduct religious classes and discourses regularly. We have a Seminary to train novices at our Headquarters. We publish a number of journals in English and in local languages. Publication and distribution of books is a major activity in some of the branch centres of the Ramakrishna Mission.

This account of the Ramakrishna Movement will be incomplete if I don't mention the important part played in it by Sri Sarada Devi, the spiritual consort of Sri Ramakrishna, known popularly as the Holy Mother. Like Sri Ramakrishna, she too lived an absolutely chaste and holy life which was outwardly not different from the life of a simple village woman. But behind the veil of shyness and humility she remained a storehouse of wisdom and spiritual power. She acted as the Guru or spiritual guide to hundreds of people. But her most important trait was spiritual motherhood. She was the embodiment of universal motherhood. She looked upon everyone from the untouchable sweeper and robber to the much respected senior monks as her children. That was the only relation she ever had with the world. Her great mother love acted as a strong binding force during the early years of the Ramakrishna Movement. Even now it is this force that is holding together the Ramakrishna Movement with all its racial, religious, cultural and linguistic diversities. Her last message, in the form of her advice given to a woman a few days before her death, is enough to give you an

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The Waste Lands That Enrich Our Lives

SWAMI NITYABODHANANDA

The author of this thoughtful paper has been for many years the spiritual leader of the Ramakrishna Vedanta Centre in Genève, Switzerland.

Introduction:

Words are *cheverel*, goat-skin gloves; we can turn them inside out and make double usage. "Wasting" is one such word. In popular use, to waste is to spend recklessly and lavishly and without purpose, energy or wealth, and to end up in bankruptcy and ruin. A deeper look will reveal a nobler dimension of the term 'waste'. Wasting is spending lavishly and generously but with a purpose aiming at the increase of the faculty or wealth spent—the wealth of knowledge when spent increases enormously. In this context, 'Wasting' is enriching: "*Vyaye krte vardhate eva nityam vidyā dhanam.*"

In this paper, we shall study four aspects or stages of God's generous spending to bring into existence the phenomenal world with all its habitants, and Man, the Crown of creation. The source and sustainer of all energy and wealth, the Providence Supreme spent Himself for the world to be. This generosity is detailed in the Vedantic cosmology. "*Ātmanah ākāśas sambhūtaḥ.*" (*Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, II. 1.i) From this self, verily ether arose. ...

The second aspect is man's purposeful spending and Nature's filling up the void if his spending ends up in the loss of that faculty. This vital collaboration of Nature, God's handmaid, is well illustrated in the life of the poet, John Milton. He lost his eyesight in the middle of his life. In Milton's *Ode To Blindness* he says that the loss was more than compensated by the opening of his Soul's eye.

The third stage is pre-eminently God's generous gift to Man, that of *Bhukti* and *Mukti*. *Mukti* is posed by the Divine as a sequel to *Bhukti*.

The fourth is the gift of the 'ground', the land on which humankind practises the art of wasteful but purposeful spending to discover and enrich itself. This is the *Kṣetra*, the field of the 13th Chapter of the *Gīta*. The *Kṣetra* is the inner space of the Integral Man. *This wasteland at first sight is arid, because un-owned and uncultivated.* We have to 'own' our field and cultivate it. Then only we can reap. Owning is not possessing. To own a capital or a ground, one must know its worth, cultivate it and make it fertile and yielding. Then the ground belongs to him. There is belonging and involvement. A disciple of Sri Ramakrishna said, "My Master has given me a big capital. True, but I have to make it my *own*".

* * *

In the beginning was Action;
There rolled out welcome's red carpet
For Becoming.
Vast space—Ākāśa
and Time, the moving space
of Eternity,
And finally the human person.
Well made,—*Sukṛtam!*

Wisdom from waste:

In the beginning was *Action*. We prefer to speak of the beginning in this way, than "In the beginning was Sat", or "In the beginning was the Word." (*Bible*)

The Supreme who is Will-Action willed and the world with all its habitants came into existence. The Source and Sustainer of all energy and wealth spent Himself. Wasted Himself generously and lavishly. Like a flower that wastes its sweetness in the desert air, the Supreme spreads His Ananda. "If *Ananda* were not in the air, who would have breathed or lived?" (*T. Upaniṣad*, II.7.i) This is the first phase of God's generosity.

In the second stage God inspires Man to follow His example to waste generously. In case the spending ends up in a loss or ruin, Mother Nature looks to it that the void is filled up. Witness for instance how nature, God's hand-maid, built and filled up when the poet John Milton lost his eyesight and became blind. In *Ode To Blindness* he says that his inner vision—the Soul's eye took its place. His soul became more bent towards his Maker.

When I consider how my light is spent
E're half my days, in this dark world
and wide,
And that one Talent, which is death
to hide,
Lodg'd with me useless, though my Soul
more bent
To serve therewith my Maker, and
present. ...

We have highlighted two aspects of the generosity of the Divine, spending generously and filling up the void.

Now comes the third phase of God's generosity—Providence, after profusely providing mankind with the means of Bhukti, poses Mukti as the crowning act of His generosity. "*Bhukti-mukti pradāyakam, bhukti-mukti dasīlam*"—so runs the refrain of the *Phalaśrūti*. These two are not posed as alternatives. Mukti is the imperative sequel. Bhukti is freedom in the senses, Mukti is freedom from the senses, Bhukti is enjoyment with objects, Mukti is joy

without them. The Supreme has a cardinal message in posing Mukti as the sequel. Are we slaves or masters of Bhukti? If the latter, then freedom takes to its wings and soars high, whereas in slavery to Bhukti, freedom's wings are clipped. *Both are here and now.*

The Mukti climate, like omnipresence, covers all seasons—winter and summer, and all persons—sinners and saints.

Fragments from the Shipwreck:

In the evening years of one's life, it is natural to look back over the past, wanting to assess the overall Capital with the losses and gains. All will agree that life is a battle, may be on land or on sea. On the sea of life, all have to brave the wild storms and avoid hidden rocks. Many shipwrecks, some partial, some total, no deaths. Only survivals. A privileged few among them collect the fragments. The 'fragments' are not pieces of wood from the broken ship, but Dharmic fragments, fragments of virtue, practised which, ever float and never sink. It is only with these fragments that the boat, the 'body' of the next birth can be built. Collecting and re-collecting the 'fragments' is highly rewarding for a departing Soul. Even a fragment of a virtue saves us from great fear (*Gītā* II.40). During the final years, the greatest fear is the fear of death. Armed with the dharmic fragments as also with the certainty that "the Lord's, the Ocean of Love's"—compassion is standing with outstretched hands to accept him, the devotee welcomes death with a smile. That was the case of Chelaparamban Namboothiri, a contemporary of Mepathur Narayana Bhattathiri, of Guruvayoor (Kerala) glory. Chelaparamban chanted a verse enumerating the persons for whom the release was immediate, or after a week (Parikṣit), or six months (Dhruva). "With what remains of my life I propitiate you, O Lord," he said,

and prostrated in the *Maṇḍapam* (courtyard) before the Lord of Guruvayoor. He did not get up.

Waste Land—Virgin Land:

The fourth and last phase of God's generosity is the creation of the 'Field'—the *Kṣetra*—the inner space of the integral Man, constituting *Manas*, *Buddhi*, *Ahaṁkāra* and *Bhūta-s*, the elements which make up one's being. This is the 'Waste Land'—why not—'Virgin Land', for man to cultivate. Along with the gift of the field came the know-how of cultivation. The knowledge of the 'knower of the field' of the *Gītā*. Before we close this section let us fix in our minds the two seminal ideas: 1. Wasting is spending generously and lavishly with a purpose: The void created by this spending is filled up immediately by Nature's law of economy; 2. Wasteland is the ground in Man, at first arid, but later rich as man cultivates it and owns it as part of his own self, even as a thinker owns his thought, or, as *Brahman* owns and integrates *Māyā* to Itself.

Discovery of Wasteland:

In an attempt to give meaning to life, one looks within and finds a wide chasm yawning in oneself—the distance that separates 'what one is' and 'what one wants to be', between what one is now and the ideal which is not yet accomplished. A scrutiny reveals that the ideal is in oneself, not outside, and one is projecting it all the time. The road to the ideal is paved with opposites, impure and pure, *adharma* and *dharma*, and so on. The opposites create contradiction, 'I can, and I cannot'. Contradiction breeds tension and tension gives energy. The pull between the opposites must be maintained because the pull widens the field of consciousness. Opting for one of the opposites eases the tension, but the prize of tension, viz, the

transcendence of opposites, is lost. By maintaining the tension, englobing the opposites and transcending them becomes possible. It is the superconscious that makes transcendence possible. This function of the superconscious is shut out when we think that the conscious level with its tensions and creativity is enough. Accepting the working of the superconscious brings in the dawn of the wisdom of the *Overself*. This wisdom englobes the opposites and transcends them in a unifying experience.

"Give up all the dichotomies of the relative existence. Giving them up, give up *that* by which you abandoned both." This is the unity unifying-consciousness of which the *Upaniṣad* speaks. "What delusion, what sorrow is there for the one who has this *Ekatvabhāva*" (*Iśa Upaniṣad*, 7). On the wasteland, the Supreme has sown the million dualities. Man is invited to own this ground by getting involved—to cultivate it and reap Unity, the Sameness, the *Sarvātma-bhāva*.

Waste Land—Eliot Fashion

*"The world is a fiction
And is made up of contradiction
Do what you will."*

These lines are not from Eliot, but serve us well as a guiding light to understand the enigmatic poem of Eliot.

He begins in great form by the "*Burial of the Dead*". "April is the cruellest month, breeding lilacs out of the dead land, mixing memory and desire, stirring dull roots with spring rain." True, roots of memory are dull without the rain of desire.

April being spring is not the cruellest month. None can breed lilacs (beautiful spring flowers) out of dead land! Open contradictions!

Contradictions, product of opposing impressions and conflicting ideals are the

very stuff of life, raw material of intelligent living. The more the number of contradictions, the higher the quality of life. "If I were a tree among the trees, I would have neither conflicts nor, contradictions." But often contradictions go unnoticed in life. Comes a moral crisis and we begin to search for the meaning of life, and the role of contradiction. Eliot wants to draw our attention to the role of contradiction by affirming something which openly contradicts our experience.

"Breeding lilacs out of dead land."

This said, he shows how to transcend contradictions.

Nothing really dies ; death is a change of form. Nothing is really born. This is the ultimate Truth. To live this truth is to go beyond words and thought, is to transcend thought. Transcending thought is to englobe the opposites and to englobe the opposites we must see the opposites at the same time, in a flash. Going beyond thought is possible in silence only. It seems impossible to go beyond thought because we rarely practise silence in the way we should. The silent mind is God's gift, *is God*. Eliot knew it and lived it—

*"I could not speak and my eyes failed,
I was neither living nor dead and I knew
nothing, looking into the 'HEART OF
LIGHT', 'THE SILENCE'."*

Those who know this silence and live it do not die, because God is in their heart. Those who do not know it, are 'ANGELS UNAWARES'. They too, do not die. So, then there is no dead and no burial. But on the relative plane, there is death and burial—on the transcendental level, no death, no burial. Eliot starts off with a sublime contradiction.

A firm believer in the unitary principle governing the world, Eliot kept for himself

the dualism and the play of the opposites, like night and day, fall and rise. These opposites are not simple external events, but events happening in the inner space, the time of the poet and of everyone. For the poet, they are parts of a whole and do not contradict. The creative imagination of the poet englobes the opposites and provokes transcendence. The poet is a master of the transcending act and Eliot is at his best in his poem "*Waste Land*".

Life at first sight is a waste land—arid and barren, but inviting us to 'own it' and cultivate it. When cultivated, it yields rich harvest. The harvest is *here and now*.

The harvest is the unitary and unifying vision of the opposites. Fall and rise, death and birth, are seen not as successive, but as simultaneous. This is the vision of the Totality, here and now. The fragments are *Datta*, *Damyata*, and *Dayadhvam*—giving, self-control and compassion (*Br. Upaniṣad*, V.2.i). In reality they are not fragments, but 'wholes'—...*svalpamapyasya dharmasya trāyate mahato bhayāt*. (*Gītā*, II. 40).

Eliot had a glimpse of this Totality in a flash as is evident in the last stanza of his poem, "*Waste Land*":

*I sat upon the shore
Fishing, with the arid plain behind me
Shall I at least set my lands in order ?
London bridge is falling down, falling
down, falling down.*

* * *

These fragments I have shored against my ruins—*Damyata*, *datta*, *dayadhvam*, *Sāntiḥ*! *Sāntiḥ*! *Sāntiḥ*! London bridge falling is an event in the inner space of Eliot ; so too the collecting of the 'fragments' of his shipwreck (*ruins*, in his own words), and the highlighting of the summit of Transcendence by three *Sāntiḥ*-s (peace benedictions) to match with the three falling London Bridges.

The waste land and sarvamukti:

Incarnations and the other messengers of the Most High have promised that they would come again and again to help until the last man is liberated. The queue of humanity is unending. Adding to this assuring voice is the voice of modern Rantidevas, declaring: "I want neither kingdom, nor heaven, nor even the cessation of my births. All that I desire is to assuage the suffering of humanity."

These voices roll up and down the corridor of Time, waking up those who are sleepy or sleeping, also those who are gossiping. In the unending queue of humanity, the last are the immortal Rantidevas, repeating to all those who come up in the line, "Move on, after you, brother ; I wait."

Those who wait for others to pass on are already liberated. The 'Wasteland' is always present, so too is liberation.

THE RAMAKRISHNA MISSION—WHAT IT STANDS FOR

(Continued from page 457)

idea of the vastness of her vision. "My daughter", she said, "if you want peace of mind, do not look at the faults of others... Learn to make the world your own. No one is a stranger. The whole world is yours."

These three great personalities—Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Sarada Devi the Holy Mother, and Swami Vivekananda—represent

all that is best in the Ramakrishna Movement. You can see their pictures everywhere in our centres. For us they are not mere symbols but living realities. And they do not belong to the Ramakrishna Movement alone ; they belong to the whole humanity. May their noble lives and liberating message be a source of inspiration to all mankind. Thank you.

Hindu Ideal Of Service

DR. SATISH K. KAPOOR

In his scholarly essay, Dr. Kapoor writes that seva or service is an important spiritual attitude, even a way of life to the devout Hindus. Loving service to humanity takes one nearer to God. The author, who has written a number of books and articles, is a teacher of History at the Lyllapur Khalsa College, Jalandhar City, Punjab.

One can serve with the heart, not with the head. The heart alone, when tuned with humanity at large, can feel the throbs of another heart in the manner of natural empathy. The head more or less is a calculating organ which thinks in terms of profit and loss, though when well directed can concretize sentiments of pity into acts of philanthropy.

Service is love in action, love that does not demand anything in return, but is ever-giving. Love is a matter of profound tender feelings, of intensely warm sentiments, and of refined sensibilities and attitudes. When it flows spontaneously, it is transmuted into service, its quality being determined by the temperament of the persons moved to feel for others.

Service in Hinduism is not merely a matter of charity or philanthropy in an individual or organized form ; it is rather a way of life, an attitude towards the phenomenal existence, a step towards the realization of the Supreme, and above all, a means to fulfil one's *dharma*. In its material sense, it stems from *karuṇā* (compassion), an inherent trait of the tender-hearted souls ; it is best performed through *śraddhā* (trust or faith) and *tyāga* (renunciation), and often culminates in some form of *dāna* (giving), viz. time, money, knowledge, physical help and the like. In its transcendental sense, it is the pathway to truth, to God, as every virtuous deed of the *sādhaka* (devotee) turns out to

be an act of *arcanā* (worship) ; it is like offering an oblation to humanity on the *karmakṣetra*, or field of the world.

Service may be done at the mental (*mānasic*), material (*bhautic*) or spiritual (*ādhyātmic*) levels, both in the *sthāvara* (unmoving) and *jaṅgama* (moving) existence, depending upon the exigency of circumstances. Those who adopt this path are normally led to do so by one or more factors : such as their prophets' lauding the nobility inherent in philanthropic acts ; their sects' or communities' upholding the tradition of virtuous deeds, and so it must be continued ; or the hope that service will win them adherents from other faiths, bring name and fame, annihilate the impact of unholy *karma* (actions), ensure for them a place in heaven or prosperity in the next birth, and so on. In all these cases, service becomes conditioned or compulsive, as also a means to gaining something in return. It does not stem from the very being of the man, and hence cannot be described as *sāttvic*, or of the purest type, in which the doer is completely detached from his actions. When service aims at realizing some material goal or gain, in this or the next world, it takes *rājasic* overtones ; but when it is rendered to boost the ego at the cost of others, it becomes *tāmasic*.

Service may be rendered daily (*nitya*) by making offerings to the poor, the sick, the

downtrodden or others deserving help. It may be performed occasionally for the expiation of sins (*naimittika*), for some particular gain, viz. wealth or a male child (*kāmya*), for the fulfilment of higher spiritual motives (*ādhyātmic*), for the acquisition of super powers in the course of *mantra siddhi*, or the accomplishment of a spell (*ādhidaivic*), or without any pre-conceived objective in mind (*vimala*).

The belief that the Hindu sacred texts are concerned more with metaphysical subtleties than with the well-being of man in this world is not based on facts. *Sevā*, *paropakāra* or *lokopakāra*, the terms commonly used to connote altruistic attitudes, form a cardinal principle of Hindu ethics, its allied aspects being *dayā* (mercy), *maitr* (comradeship), *dāna* (alms-giving), *ātithya* (hospitality towards guests and strangers), *priyavaditā* (sweet speech), *alobha* (freedom from greed), and the will to suffer for others. Service to mankind is regarded as a holy deed, while inflicting harm on others has been dubbed as sin (*paropakārah* *punyāya pāpāya parapīdanam*). Bhartṛhari says in his *Nitiśataka* (verse 73) that the human body is adorned, not by anointing with sandalwood paste (*candana lepa*), but by helping others. It has been suggested that while giving service one must not make any distinction between one's foe or friend. "What excellence is there," says a hymn, "if one is full of human kindness towards one who is a benefactor, or one free from rivalry? He is the foremost among the good, whose mind is compassionate towards one who is inimical and has done harm impetuously."¹ True service transcends the barriers of caste, creed, colour, sex or nationality, and does not seek anything in return. "The best person is he," says another hymn, "who helps others with-

out any expectations, the middling one returns the help he has received, the low one does not even do that but becomes an enemy for the very help he has received."² But, even in the last case, a *sthitaprajña* (one who is equipped in mind) does not deviate from performing noble acts.

The path of service is the path of virtue. The *Rgveda* containing the earliest sacred hymns known to mankind makes this prayer: "May we always serve humanity without demanding the price of our service. May we ever be benevolent, kind, self-sacrificing, detached and adjusting. May we surrender all and serve humanity like the sun and the moon."³ Obviously, the emphasis is on selfless service. In Chapter X (117.1-8), the *Rgveda* goes on to extol the sentiments of compassion and admonishes the rich to help the poor in a number of ways. It says, for example, "Providence has not, surely, ordained death only for the hungry and ill fed, for death in various forms does make short work even of such as have enough to eat. It is also certain that the wealth of him, who (out of his resources) helps the needy, does not get exhausted, whereas he who does not succour the poor has none to console him in times of trouble."⁴ And again: "He who does not feed either a respectable guest or a poor friend in distress, but eats all alone, has only sin to his credit."⁵ The categories of people which deserve to be served are: the indigent (*ādhra*), victims of penury (*raṣita*), the emaciated (*kṛṣa*), the itinerant holy men going from door to door for alms

2. *Ibid.*, p. 1765.

3. *svasti panthāmanūcarema suryyācandra-masaviva punardadatāghnatājanata sangamemahi. Rgveda*, V. 51.15.

4. *na vā u devāḥ kṣudhamidvadham daduruta-sitāmupa gacanti mṛtyavah, uto rayih prṇato nopadasyatyuta prṇanmarḍitarā na vindate. Rgveda*, X. 117.1.

5. *nāryamaṇam puṣyati no sakhāyam kevalagho bhavati kevalādī. Rgveda*, X. 117.6.

1. Ludwik Sternbach, *Mahā-Subhāṣita Samgraha* Editor S. Bhaskaran Nair, Vol. IV (Hoshiarpur: VVRI, 1980) p. 1768.

(*grhu*), friends in need (*aryaman*) or members of the same society (*sacābhu sakhā*). It is implied that a person should not be judged by the wealth he commands, but by the help he provides to the needy and the distressed. (*Rg.* X. 117.1-4, 8) .

Life in its primitive form prospers by garbbing, but in its civilized form, it enriches itself by giving. "Collect by hundreds of hands and distribute by thousands" (*śata hasta samnara sahasrahasta sam-kir*), says the *Atharvaveda* (III. 24.5), which further admonishes (VIII. 1.7) not to neglect living beings (*jīvebhyopramadāḥ*). The Hindu sacred texts extol the virtues of giving, as giving helps the seeker to realize the Supreme in His creation. The *Sikṣā-valī* of the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* (I. 11.3) says in this context that charity should be "given with faith, should not be given without faith, should be given in plenty, should be given with modesty, should be given with fear, should be given with sympathy." (*śraddhayā deyam, aśraddhayā adeyam, śriyā deyam, hriyā deyam, bhiyā deyam suṁvidā deyam.*)

Even though the propensity to give or serve is a natural quality of the soul which takes shape in the crucible of past lives as a result of noble *samskāras* (impressions), it can be cultivated in the present life too. "May thy heart be full of generosity, kindness and love. May it flow to the down-trodden and make them happy," says the *Sāmaveda* (hymn 55). It further requires human beings to lead their lives on the ideals of *yajña*, or the spirit of sacrifice. (hymn 56) The entire Vedic literature alludes to the concept of the welfare of mankind through love, goodwill and mutual help. The *Yajurveda* (XII. 54) exhorts: "Heal up the wounds of thy fellow pilgrims, and infuse the spirit of perfect harmony in their hearts." Another verse (*Yajurveda* IV. 13) enjoins that the human body ought to

become an unfailing instrument for performing beneficial deeds.⁶

These ennobling ideas, concretized by the *Dharmasāstras*, the *Ethics*, the *Purāṇas* and the *Smṛtis* influenced many Indian faiths, from the grossly idolatrous to the most subtle, and percolated through the writings of Bhakti and Sufi reformers in medieval times forming, as it were, the antithesis and fulfilment of the Vedic injunctions. Of them all, the ideal of *sevā* propounded by the *Guru Granth Sahib*, and made tangible by the devout Sikh congregation in *gurudwārās* is worthy of emulation both because of its efficacy in dissolving the individual ego, and its universal applicability in life. The socio-religious reform movements of the nineteenth century India, viz. the Brahmo Samāj, the Ārya Samāj and the Rāmakrishna Mission, also made a significant attempt to revive the Vedic ideals of service and sacrifice.⁷

The metaphysical roots of service lie in the fact that even though all living beings exist as independent units, each forms a part of the universal whole. Hence, if one part is diseased or distressed, it is bound to affect other parts. He who looks upon other beings as he would look upon himself (*ātmavat sarvabhūteṣu*), is a true *jñāni*, i.e., one who has attained to divine knowledge. Instead of giving egocentric responses to the social milieu, he develops a universal approach to the problems of life. He understands that selflessness, not selfishness, is the basis of human existence, and that avarice is opposed to the divine purpose. Whom to

6. The translation of hymns is based on Pandit Satyakam Vidyānkar, *The Holy Vedas* (Delhi: International Veda Trust, 1983) pp. 222, 255.

7. For a critical study of this aspect, see Satish K. Kapoor, *Religious Trends in Renaissance India: Revivalism, Reformation and Syncretism* in Wazir Singh (Editor) *Religious Pluralism and Co-existence* (Patiala: Punjabi University, 1986) pp. 77-89.

abhor and from whom to grab, if the unity of the Self in all is realized. Says the *Īśāvasyopaniṣad*: "The wise man who perceives all beings as not distinct from his own Self at all, and his own Self as the Self of every being—he does not, by virtue of that perception, hate anyone."⁸

Different forms of existence are like waves on the ocean of universal consciousness, and are bound to differ in terms of their size, shape, habits, character, etc. though, in essence, they are the same. It is this aspect of unity in diversity which forms the quintessence of the Vedic philosophy, and it is as much applicable to the realm of metaphysics as it is to society. "Behave with others as you would with yourself. ...With the eyes of a friend, let us regard one another," says the *Yajurveda*. (XL. 6; XXXVI. 18) Love all creatures, is both a moral obligation and a way to unfolding the divine aspects of man's being. It tantamounts to following the path of the good (*śreya*) and relinquishing the path of the pleasant (*preya*), as borne out by the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*. (I. 2).

The ideal of service finds an eloquent exposition in the *Bhagavadgītā* where the concept of *lokasaṅgraha*, denoting the well-being and solidarity of the world, becomes the praxis of moral and religious life of human beings who are required to enter onto the path of *jñāna*, *bhakti* or *karma*, as per their mental disposition, for the realization of the Supreme. He alone can attain to the beatitude of the Lord, who rejoices in the good of all beings (*sarva bhūta hite ratāḥ*), says the scripture. (V. 25) The *jñāni* serves humanity because he discerns his Self in all beings; the *bhakta* because love becomes his innate nature, and the *karmin* because he

is enjoined to do virtuous acts. The three positive performances (*vidhi sādhanā*) mentioned in the *Bhagavadgītā* (XVIII. 5) are *yajña*, *dāna*, and *tapa*. Among the fourteen kinds of *yajñas* enumerated in the scripture at different places, *dravya yajña* (IV. 28) performed by giving material substances to the deserving, is of much significance. Service to humanity is deemed as one of the five daily supreme sacrifices, called the *pañcamahāyajña*—others being sacrifice to the *ṛṣis*, *devas*, *pitṛs*, and to the animal kingdom. *The Bhagavadgītā* (IX. 27) extols charity if it is offered in the name and on behalf of the Almighty. It is said to consist of the offerings of *abhaya* (shelter to the fearful or desolate), of *vidyā* (knowledge), and of *artha* (religious endowments, etc.). *Tapasyā* incorporates such ethical ideals as purity, control over senses, non-injury, service to others and honesty.

In the course of his spiritual journey, the *sādhaka* is expected to first dedicate the fruits of his actions (*karma-phala-arpaṇa*) to the Lord, then the action itself (*karma-arpaṇa*), and finally renounce even *mokṣa* (*karma-phala-tyāga*). After having realized that each work contributing to the welfare of mankind is God's primary work, he performs it as an act of worship, with much greater zeal.

One of the distinguishing aspects of the concept of service is that it is rooted in *dharma*, the core of ethics. Etymologically, *dharma* means that which sustains or binds the society. Whatever leads to the welfare (*abhyudaya*) of mankind is *dharma*, and whatever adds to its miseries is *adharma*. In the *Rāmacarita-mānasa* (*Uttara Kāṇḍa*, 62.1), Gosvāmi Tulsidās describes *parahita* (doing good to others) as the greatest of all dharmas (*parahita sarisa dharma nahin bhāi*). From *dharma* ensues truth and righteousness, the principles which uphold the entire creation. "If we transgress it, it will slay

8. *yas tu sarvāṇi bhūtāni ātmany evānupasyati sarvabhūteṣu cātmanam tato na vijugupsate. Īśāvasyopaniṣad, verse 6.*

us. If we protect it, it will protect us," says the *Manusmṛiti*. (VIII. 15) The Indian concept of *dharma*, as explained in the Hindu texts, is much wider than the Western concept of religion, which literally implies "that which binds the soul to God". *Dharma* means this, and much more. "It binds the embodied being in bonds of *karma* to past and future births, in bonds of veneration to the forefathers, in bonds of love to the present society, in bonds of protective blessings to the future generations, and in bonds of adoration to God."⁹

In a strictly religious sense, *dharma* is classified as *siddha* (self-existent), *sādhya* (to be accomplished as an end), and *sādhana* (to be adopted as a means to that end). *Sevā-dharma*, or the obligation to serve, falls in the last category. The *Nītiśataka* (verse 59) says that even *yogis* cannot fathom the depths of it. (*sevādharmah paramagahano yogināmapyagamyah.*) It is, therefore, not surprising that of the four *puruṣārthās*, or aims of human existence, as mentioned in the Hindu scriptures, *dharma* gets precedence over the other three, *artha*, *kāma*, and *mokṣa* (attainment of material prowess, progeny, and supreme realization).

In its social aspect, *dharma* is classified as *sāmānya dharma* and *svadharma*. The former refers to the general laws for all men, and the latter to the personal laws enjoined by the scriptures for different *varṇas* and *āśramas*, or age-groups. *Sāmānya dharma*, with its emphasis on the cultivation of positive moral virtues prepares the ground for the latter. These virtues have been described in the *Purāṇas*, the Vedic *Kalpasūtras* and other sacred works. Compassion towards all creatures is the first of

the eight virtues of the soul, as enumerated by the sage Gautama in his *Dharmasūtra* (VIII. 20-22), others being, forbearance, freedom from envy, purity, avoidance of undue exertion, right conduct, freedom from avarice, and absence of greed. The quality of sharing one's comforts with other people (*samvibhāgaḥ*) is ordained for all the four *āśramas*, namely *brahmacarya*, *gṛhasthya*, *vānaprastha*, and *sannyāsa* in the *Āpastambha Dharmasūtra*. (I. 8,23,4-6) As per the rules of good conduct, the head of a family is required to offer food to his guests, old and sick people, females under his protection, and others, before he takes his meal. He may starve himself, his wife, or his son, but not his servant. He is also asked not to eat anything without having cut off a portion therefrom as a *bali* (gift-offering).¹⁰ The hospitality of Hindus extends beyond the world of humans, and encompasses in its fold even worms, insects, birds and animals, who, as the *Skanda Purāṇa* (III. 2.64), says, depend for their subsistence on the charities of a householder.

Social organism is composed of mutually dependent parts, each one of which is unique in its own way, as it helps to maintain and preserve the vital processes. The stability of the total structure will thus depend as much on the right division of functions among its constituent units, as on the harmony between them all. Realizing this, the ancient Hindu seers and law-givers evolved the concept of *svadharma* for different *varṇas* (castes) in terms of their *guṇa* (quality), *karma* (action), and *svabhāva* (temperament), and transformed all types of work into some kind of service to society.

In metaphysical terms, *svadharma* is classified as *pravṛtti dharma* (pertaining to

9. K. S. Ramaswami Sastri, "Dharma: The Ascending Stairway Unto God" in *The Kalyan Kalpataru (Dharma Tattva Number)*, Vol. IV, no. I (Gorakhpur: Gita Press, 1938) p. 64.

10. For an excellent study of this aspect, see Ram Gopal, *India of Vedic Kalpasūtras* (Delhi: National Publishing House, 1959) pp. 450-63.

worldly life and pleasures) and *nivṛtti dharma* (pertaining to freedom from worldly cravings). But in common parlance, its ramifications are many and varied. Take, for example, the *dharma* of a pupil—his duty (*chatram sīlamasya*) is to be always at his teacher's service (*gurukaryeṣvavahitāḥ*), and to protect him like an umbrella.¹¹

The *dharma* of a woman is to serve her husband in a dedicated manner (*patī-sevā*); of the householder is to serve his guests, and of the grown-up children to look after their aged parents and other elderly persons (*vrddha-sevā*); of the ruler to look after his people (*prajā-sevā*), and of the people, in turn, to work for the prosperity of their motherland (*rāṣṭra-sevā*); and so on. But the supreme *dharma* is that which incorporates the service of all living beings, taking them as part of one global family.

The concept of service is often conceived in material terms. But this kind of service can be performed only by those who are resourceful. Is, then, service the exclusive domain of the affluent who will, according

to the theory of *karma*, reap the benefits of their philanthropic acts in their next birth, and possibly acquire a position of eminence as a result thereof? Perhaps no. The Hindu tradition has it that even a smile, a kind gesture, a compliment, an inspiring word, or just the will to help in accordance with one's resources, can be commendable acts of service.

Service must become an attitude of life, if it is to be purposeful. Offering a glass of water to a thirsty traveller, providing room to an old or pregnant woman in a crowded bus or train, showing the path to someone lost, or cheering up another who is in a state of depression—these and other acts have a much higher social value and religious merit than the publicized philanthropic deeds which are often tainted with some selfish interest. Sporadic help rendered by religious or cultural institutions can mitigate the sufferings of people, only to some extent. Hence, each individual must be an institution of service in himself. Swami Vivekananda said, one should do good to others because that is the only condition of life—“thereby you expand beyond your little self; you live and grow”.¹² Let service flow from our very being, as fragrance comes out of a flower. Let love be the overriding principle of our lives, as all existence is just “our own self magnified”.

11. V. S. Aggarwala, *India As Known to Paṇini: A Study of the Cultural Material in the Aṣṭādhyayi* (Lucknow: University of Lucknow, 1953) p. 280.

12. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. VII (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1969) p. 474.

One must live carefully. Every action produces its results. It is not good to use harsh words towards others or be responsible for their suffering....The purpose of one's life is fulfilled only when one is able to give joy to another.

—Sri Sarada Devi

Miss Noble Into Sister Nivedita

MAMATA RAY

What ideas and forces helped to transform Miss Noble into a great woman and illustrious friend and servant of India, Prof. Mamata Ray vividly portrays. The author is a lecturer in the Department of Economics and Politics at Viswa Bharati University, Santiniketan, West Bengal.

Swami Vivekananda's presence in London in 1895-96 marked the beginning of the great change that was to come over Margaret Noble's life, ultimately to transform her into one of India's illustrious servants in the modern era. And though the Swami departed from England for India in December of 1896, he continued to occupy an important place in Margaret's life by way of the ideas he had given her and by his many letters to her. In this article we shall note how Swamiji encouraged Margaret always to give expression to the high truths of Vedanta, ultimately giving his blessings to her future work in India, mainly the uplift and education of Indian women.

Margaret eventually accepted completely her Guru's ideas on practical religion and philosophy. She was to write volumes in praise of awakened Hinduism preached by the great Swami. "Here," (she thus wrote in *"Our Master and His Message"*)—

...is the crowning significance to our Master's life, for here he becomes the meeting-point, not only of East and West, but also of past and future. If the many and the One be indeed the same Reality, then it is not all modes of worship alone, but equally all modes of work, all modes of struggle, all modes of creation, which are paths of realization. No distinction, henceforth, between sacred and secular. To labour is to pray. To conquer is to renounce. Life is itself religion. To have and to hold is as stern a trust as to quit and to avoid.¹

There is much we can learn from the close perusal of the letters between the Guru and the Disciple. We shall see a few of them, noting particularly how in their correspondence, Vivekananda continued to guide and inspire his devoted spiritual daughter from India.

I

"In the West, the Swami revealed himself to us," writes Sister Nivedita, "as a religious teacher only....renunciation, the thirst after freedom, the breaking of bondage, the fire of purity, the joy of the witness, the mergence of the personal in the impersonal, these and these alone, had been the themes² of his discourses in the West which showed him as an apostle of the inner life. Yet, in another fundamental orientation of his character he seemed to be more than anything a worker for India. In a simpler mind, these two roles—the Yogin and contemplative, and the leonine worker, would have come into conflict with each other. In Swami Vivekananda, however, there was no clash. The practical religion that Swamiji preached was that of work and self-sacrifice combined with contemplation.

For what end? It was work without any personal gain that was wanted—for the welfare of the many, for the happiness of the many. The Sanskrit, "*Bahujana hitāya*,

1. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989) Vol. I, Introduction, xv.

2. See "The Master as I Saw Him" in *The Complete Works of Sister Nivedita* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1982) Vol. I, p. 38.

bahujana sukhāya”—for the good and happiness of the many, became the slogan of his life’s mission. Vivekananda’s was a new philosophy of a new age in India, and appeared to be something of a break from the old traditional shunning of the world, reclusiveness and absorption in exclusive meditation. As the leader of the new order of monks founded by his Guru, Sri Ramakrishna, he gave a new orientation to spiritual practice, wherein monks would strive for personal *Mukti* (freedom) by working for the freedom of the whole world. They would no more pass their lives in aloofness, but help society upwards. They would educate and enlighten the ignorant, nurse the sick, feed the poor and come to the aid of people when struck by famine, plague and other calamities.

To one who preached divinity of the soul of man, this concern for people was not an inconsistency. Swamiji taught:

*The ordinary sannyasin gives up the world, goes out and thinks of God. The real sannyasin lives in the world, but is not of it. Those who deny themselves, live in the forest, and chew the cud of unsatisfied desires are not true renouncers. Live in the midst of the battle of life. Anyone can keep calm in a cave or when asleep. Stand in the whirl and madness of action and reach the Centre. If you have found the Centre, you cannot be moved.*³

The broader aspect of Swamiji’s urging of service to God in man was to open his followers’ eyes as to the Centre—to the God within. He wanted to awaken consciousness to the inner divinity of man and to help this he taught others to work in the fashion of the *Gita*, doing duties towards men as unselfish service to God. Unselfish spirit in work constituted for Swami Vivekananda the

essence of the *religion of work* (Karma Yoga) that he preached and stood for.

As Swamiji sought to serve humanity through the religion of work, so he also sought to uplift his country by the same means. His lasting regret was that his country was steeped in *tamoguna*, inertia and passivity accruing from centuries of foreign domination, and this was the basic reason for her downfall in history over the ages. Determined to deliver his country from indolence, lethargy and inactivity, Swamiji went to the West, attracted many sincere souls like Margaret Noble and awakened the whole Indian nation to the need for action, and self-help. His task was to set India on her feet. As Sister Nivedita said, to take Swami Vivekananda as a mere teacher of popular religion is to miss a great significance of his life and work. He was truly a patriot-saint of India and spent his life as “a worker at foundations”.⁴ She wrote:

*There was one thing, however, deep in the Master’s nature that he himself never knew how to adjust. This was his love of his country and his resentment of her suffering. Throughout those years in which I saw him almost daily, the thought of India was to him like the air he breathed....he was a born lover; and queen of his adoration was his motherland.*⁵

Elsewhere, Nivedita writes: “His whole heart and soul was a burning epic of the country, touched to an over-flow of mystic passion by her very name.”^{5a}

Swami Vivekananda was indeed both a patriot and a prophet, one of the greatest of

4. *The Complete Works of Sister Nivedita*, Vol. I, p. 45.

5. *Ibid.*

5a. See “The National Significance of the Swami Vivekananda’s Life and Work” in *The Complete Works of Sister Nivedita*, Vol. I, p. 375.

3. *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. VI, p. 84.

all time. He combined the two roles so beautifully that, far from being in conflict, with each other, they formed a composite whole in him. As such he could say: "...for my own part, I will be incarnated two hundred times if that is necessary, to do this *work amongst my people* that I have undertaken."⁶ (emphasis added)

Probably it is no exaggeration to say that Swamiji gave a new orientation to modern Hinduism so that his work of raising India's masses could be accomplished more earnestly.^{6a} It is, however, plain to the observer that ignoring the historical and national significance of Swami Vivekananda's great emphasis on *work as religion*, we shall miss the essence of much that he stood for, and certainly shall miss as well the significance of the re-orientation that he gave to the life of Miss Margaret Noble.

II

"I have plans for the women of my own country in which you, I think, could be of great help to me," Swamiji said to Margaret Noble during a conversation with her in London in 1896.⁷ But, as a constructive man of religion as well as a patriot, Swamiji was not the one to let her come to India until he was convinced that she was really ready for the mission that was waiting for her. What kind of readiness, or so to say, transformation, did the Master expect of his Disciple? First, the aspiring disciple must always guard against 'a great fault of the

Western character'....'against' (as Sister Nivedita wrote later in *The Master as I Saw Him*)...against making any attempt to force upon others that which we had merely found to be good for ourselves."⁸ Secondly, the intending disciple must eschew in herself that seemingly in-born *insularity of attitude* in the English character. Swamiji had detected such attitude in Margaret during her association with him in 1895-96. The disciple kept speaking to him of the necessity of making London more and more fair (without mention of the price some other cities of the world had to pay to make London what it was). When Swamiji retorted by saying, "And you have *blasted* other cities, to make this city of yours beautiful!"⁹ She at once realized her own insular viewpoint. Yes, there was always another point of view! That "one's conceptions of the world should be drawn up inclusive of the viewpoints of foreign peoples"¹⁰ was a lesson that Margaret Noble learnt very well from her Master. So tellingly, in fact, that in the subsequent Indian years she would try her utmost (and at times ferociously at that) to teach the same lesson to others of her own race, who as islanders were more *exclusive* than *inclusive* in their attitude to other people, especially people whom they got to rule and subjugate.

Thirdly, Margaret had to learn not to be patronising in her attitude to the people she was to serve. "Remember," Swamiji used to say to her, "if you love India at all, you must love her *as she is*, not as you might wish her to become."¹¹ Margaret's

6. These words were spoken to Margaret Noble and others in a gathering at the house of Henrietta Muller in London one evening in November 1896; *Ibid.* Vol. I, p. 36.

6a. This was not in conflict at all with his work for humanity as a whole. He only wanted to put the more immediate emphasis on that part of humanity—his people—which needed such service the most.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 35.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 54.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 35.

10. *Ibid.*

11. Having quoted Swamiji to this effect, Nivedita observes, "And it was this great firmness of his standing like a rock for what actually was, that did more than any other single fact, perhaps, to open the eyes of those aliens who loved him to the beauty and strength of that ancient poem—

attitude was to become not only one of 'selfless giving', but also one of the feeling that in giving anything to the world, she was really giving the thing to herself. A selfless satisfaction within her own heart would be the only reward she would expect for her service. She must be, that is to say, a true renouncer.¹² Finally, Margaret had to realize that however intense her love and devotion might be for her Guru, the service to which she was to be called was not that of the Master himself, but of his country, and of Truth itself.

Reviewing the letters of 1897, Swami Vivekananda to Margaret Noble, we get a clear idea of what the Master expected of the Disciple, and how much hard work Margaret must have had to face overcoming her deficiencies. The Swami's letters reveal to the nature of the work and experiences the Disciple was soon to meet with.

During his stay in London, Swami Vivekananda had established a Vedanta Centre. Just on the eve of his departure for India in late December 1896 he got Swami Abhedananda who would take charge of the London work now that he was leaving. In preparation, as it were, for the kind of work she would be called upon to do in India, Margaret Noble engaged herself in collaborating with Swami Abhedananda and assisting him in the Vedanta Centre, and she had also herself started a Vedanta Circle in Wimbledon. The work of these two Centres kept her in constant touch with Swamiji, who wrote regularly and often about the work in India. The Ramakrishna Math, the Organization of monks, and the

Ramakrishna Mission were just being established at this time and there was great news to tell. Margaret, in turn provided Swamiji with the current news of the two Centres in England. In a letter dated 5th May 1897 Swamiji wrote:

The work [of the Math and the Mission in India] has been started anyhow. A rickety old little house has been rented for six or seven shillings, where about twenty-four young men are being trained.¹³

A month and a half later Swamiji wrote to Margaret giving her more information about the conditions in which the Calcutta Centre was operating:

I have started work in the fashion in which I myself was trained—that is to say, under the trees, and keeping body and soul together anyhow. The plan has also changed a little. I have sent some of my boys to work in the famine districts. It has acted like a miracle. I find, as I always thought, that it is through the heart, and that alone, that the world can be reached. The present plan is, therefore, to train up numbers of young men (from the highest classes, not the lowest. For the latter I shall have to wait a little), and the first attack will be made by sending a number of them over a district. When these sappers and miners of religion have cleared the way, there will then be time enough to put in theory and philosophy.¹⁴

In about a fortnight's time Swamiji again wrote in the following terms:

Just now I am very busy with the famine, and except for training a number of young men for future work, have not been able to put more energy into the teaching work.

the common life to the common Indian people." See *Ibid.*, pp. 373-74.

12. "Burning renunciation," Margaret Noble wrote later as Nivedita, "was chief of all the inspirations that spoke to us through him." *Ibid.*, p. 370.

13. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. VIII, p. 399.

14. Letter of 20th June, 1897. *Ibid.*, Vol. VIII, p. 406.

The "feeding work" is absorbing all my energy and means. Although we can work only on a very small scale as yet, the effect is marvellous. For the first time since the days of Buddha, Brahmin boys are found nursing by the bed-side of cholera-stricken pariahs.

In India, lectures and teaching cannot do any good. What we want is Dynamic Religion. And that, "God willing", as the Mohammedans say, I am determined to show.¹⁵

It can be discerned from these letters that Swamiji's intention was not merely to convey information about the work being done by the Calcutta Centre of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, but to interest and inspire Margaret too. In demonstrating the practical steps being taken in the name of revived Hinduism, he was teaching that the work must be done, even if "there come tremendous thwarting blows"¹⁶...even when there are no shelters and the ways are full of difficulties¹⁷...that the work must be done... "keeping body and soul together anyhow." He was informing the Disciple that "it is through the heart, and that alone, that the world can be reached" and that service has to be rendered to the needy irrespective of caste, colour and creed...that India needed "Dynamic Religion" of the kind that removes great difficulties, and that his disciples must train themselves to this same end.

IV

Margaret Noble learned a lot from Swami's letters, and the more she saw the more she felt she too should play a part. Her appreciation of the Master's work and his total commitment deepened her own resolves. One thing she saw was that the work in

education, the task of training young men, the giving of relief in time of famine (euphemistically called by Swamiji "the feeding work"), the nursing and health and sanitation care in the cities, would require a lot of money. She knew that the money the Master had collected lecturing in America and England, even with the generous contributions of his close English and American disciples, was little compared to the magnitude of the work he had set himself to do. Having learned also that Swamiji could not expect much help from India as people had so little to give up, she took the initiative on her own to invite and collect subscriptions for and on behalf of the Ramakrishna Mission. Miss Noble's appeal in the London newspapers appeared in the following lines:

A religious order, unique of its kind, grouping together Christians, Mohammedans, and Hindus, has created a phenomenon of charity which is without equal since the days of Buddha. Give generously. Ten thousand human beings have been saved from famine in a month. A handful of rice can snatch a man from death. Our aid is necessary.¹⁸

In 1897, apart from collecting funds, Margaret Noble was acting as a bridge between the Math Brotherhood in India and the Vedanta Centres in England. In one of her first reports of "Vedanta in the West", which appeared in *The Brahmavadin*, the magazine started by Swamiji's disciples in Madras, she gave a moving account of how Swamiji transformed the lives of many of his English and American followers. Quoting this report at some length enables one to gather from it the great transformation that Margaret Noble herself was undergoing by the Swami's influence:

To not a few of us the words of Swami Vivekananda came as living water to men perishing of thirst. Many of us had been conscious

15. *Ibid.*, p. 407, Letter of 4th July, 1897.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 399, Letter of 5th May, 1897.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 406, Letter of 20th June, 1897.

18. Quoted in Lizelle Reymond, *The Dedicated* (Madras: Samata Books, 1985) p. 61.

for years past of that growing uncertainty and despair, with regard to Religion, which has beset the intellectual life of Europe for half a century. Belief in the dogmas of Christianity has become impossible to us, and we had no tool, such as we now hold, by which to cut away the doctrinal shell from the kernel of Reality in our Faith. To these, the Vedanta has given intellectual confirmation and philosophical expression of their own mistrusted intuitions. "The peoples that walked in darkness have seen a great light." So that, if it had done no more, merely by the enlargement of our religious culture, this system of thought would have been of incalculable benefit to us. But it has done much more.

To one, the very conception of a religion which preached universal tolerance—which held that *we proceed from truth to truth, and not from error to truth*—was enough...To another...it was the Swami's "*I am God*" that came as something always known, only never said before...Yet again it was the Unity of Man that was the touch needed to rationalise all the thirst for absolute service never boldly avowed in the past. Some by one gate, and some by another, we have all entered into a great heritage, and we know it.¹⁹

We will refer to two other reports published in *The Brahmavadin* in October and November 1897 which indicate the transformation underway in the Disciple. These reveal her passionate admiration for the work of the Master as well as her longing to extend the influence of the Swami throughout England and America. To quote from the October Report:

The Ramakrishna Mission is an idea that appeals to us particularly, not only for the honour of the Saint after whom it is named,—and whom many of us in England have learned to love, but also because its aims and methods are congenial to our own. This and the Alambazar Famine Relief are a splendid vindication of the spiritual life from the charge of passivity so often preferred against it by the materialistic West.

In protestant countries we have long lost the tradition of career which shall express to the

19. See *The Brahmavadin*, September 15, 1897. Also reproduced in *The Complete Works of Sister Nivedita*, Vol. II, pp. 389-90.

uttermost the striving after selflessness....This the Brotherhood of the Math has done, and some of us hope to extend the organisation—which is in our eyes cooperation—in the *form of a society ramifying through England and America* (emphasis added), and endeavouring to realise the maxim of our socialist friends—From each according to his means, to all according to their needs.²⁰

The November Report expressed similar sentiments and aspirations:

It may be hoped that eventually the English centres will do their share towards sending out those secular and spiritual educators who shall carry on Hindu work on Hindu lines as some slight acknowledgement of the great benefits conferred on themselves by the awakening missionary zeal of India.²¹

Swami Vivekananda showed more and more appreciation of his gifted disciple for the good work she was doing in England. It is found in letter after letter that he wrote in 1897. As early as 5th May he wrote:

*Such love and faith and devotion and appreciation like yours, dear Miss Noble, repays a hundred times over any amount of labour one undergoes in this life. May all blessings be yours.*²²

He wrote on 20th June 1897:

*Let me tell you plainly. Every word you write I value, and every letter is welcome a hundred times. Write whenever you have a mind and opportunity, and whatever you like, knowing that nothing will be misinterpreted, nothing unappreciated.*²³

He was even more explicit in his appreciation in the letter of 4th July, 1897:

20. See the reproduction of the report in *The Complete Works of Sister Nivedita* Vol. II, p. 392.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 393.

22. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. p. 400.

23. *Ibid.*, pp. 405-06.

*I have entire faith in your ability and sympathy. I already owe you an immense debt, and you are laying me everyday under infinite obligations. My only consolation is that it is for the good of others. ...I appreciate you every day more and more from a distance.*²⁴ (emphasis added)

Despite his kind words, when Swamiji wrote to Margaret on 23 July that "...you can do more work for us from England than by coming home"²⁵ she was almost heart-broken. The more she worked for India and the more she tried to mould herself to expectations, the more intense became her desire to come to India. She had already set her heart on it and therefore when the longed for summons did not come she felt very very disappointed indeed.

Determined, however, not to allow disappointments to overtake her, Margaret now wrote to Swamiji the following: "...Tell me frankly and candidly whether I shall be of use in India. I want to go. *I want India to teach me how to fulfil myself.*"²⁶ (emphasis added)

Before assenting to Margaret's coming, Swami Vivekananda must have been waiting for this time to arrive. Margaret was near the end of a long preparation—almost two years. She now was saying at long last that she wanted to come...not to patronize the poor Indians (as was the attitude of most missionaries of the time), but to learn from India how to fulfil herself. The last bit of missionary egoism that might have been in her was now extinguished and her time was at hand. Thinking of the leap she was about to take to see things with her own eyes, Swamiji candidly wrote on 29th July:

Let me tell you frankly that I am now convinced that you have a great future in

the work for India. What was wanted was not a man, but a woman—a real lioness—to work for the Indians, women specially.

*India cannot yet produce great women,²⁷ she must borrow them from other nations. Your education, sincerity, purity, immense love, determination, and above all, Celtic blood, made you just the woman wanted.*²⁸

Having now responded in a new tone to the Disciple's long cherished desire, Swamiji felt incumbent to advise her to ponder carefully over many difficulties she would have to face in making a new life in a foreign land. He listed them—first, she was likely to encounter the hostility of Indians as well as of Europeans. Whereas the caste-conscious and prejudiced among Indians were likely to give her a wide berth and even dislike her, the Europeans too, in general, were likely to look upon her as a 'crank' and watch her movements with suspicion. Second, the absence of all the European comforts and the blazing hot climate would likely seem a torture to one like herself, not being accustomed to those realities. Then he added, that if in spite of all the difficulties, she was determined to come to India, she was "welcome, a hundred times welcome". Swamiji assured her that he would stand by her in all difficulties, even if she gave up her struggle to be "free" in India. "The tusks of the elephant come out," he said, "but never go back; so are the words of a man never retracted. I promise you that."²⁹

27. Swamiji considered Srimati Sarala Ghosal, Editor, *Bharati*, to be extremely talented and exhorted her in a letter dated 24th April, 1897 to go to England to preach Vedanta so that money raised in the West thereby could be used to open centres for women in India. "If someone like you goes, England will be stirred, not to speak of America," wrote Swamiji. Swamiji's appeal, however, went in vain. See *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. IV, pp. 481-87.

28. *Ibid.*, Vol. VII, p. 511.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 512.

24. *Ibid.*, pp. 407-08.

25. *Ibid.*, Vol. VII, p. 510.

26. Quoted in Lizelle Reymond, p. 61.

There was, however, some more waiting before Margaret finally could take leave of England. She received two more letters from Swamiji in the meantime. In his letter of 1st October³⁰ he stressed to Margaret that even though her first attraction for the work for India developed out of her deep devotion to the Guru, she must be absolutely impersonal about him, and in her objectives and work for the country. There must not be any *expectation* of any *return*, either from the Guru or from the people. "Intense love and yet no bondage with it" was one of the central themes of the Vedanta, and Margaret should allow herself to be motivated only to that effect. The letter of 3rd November—the last Margaret would receive in England from Swamiji—carried a message from the Guru which was of utmost comfort. No other could have been more reassuring to one who was about to cross the threshold of a new life—"In case of trouble I will stand by you. You will have the whole of it if I find a piece of bread in India—you may rest assured of that."³¹

VI

Margaret Noble's mind was already made up. It was now further fortified by Swamiji's

30. *Ibid.*, Vol. VIII, pp. 428-29.

31. *Ibid.*, Vol. VIII, p. 434.

assurances. The only obligation at home was in her absence to provide support for her family. She was, after all the main earning member in the family consisting of her mother, two sisters, and brother, and it was natural that she should feel the necessity to provide somehow for them before giving herself to a completely different kind of life in a distant land. The means ready at her hand was her school in London. This she handed over to her younger sister, May. Having done so she now sought the final permission and blessings of her mother to give up everything. Mother already knew that Margaret was to follow a higher destiny. She remembered her husband's last wish before his death, he expressed that Margaret should be allowed to spread her wings, that she should be allowed to go when God called her. Such was Mary Noble, the mother of Margaret, that after some difficult moments emotionally, she gave her consent to the new life that Margaret was about to begin.

The final departure from England took place on a wet day in January 1898. Margaret was leaving behind an old life and *advancing towards freedom* in a new life of selfless giving to a foreign people. It would be a life of intense renunciation, love for Truth, and fulfilment which knew no bondage.

Good thoughts and good works cause less differentiation, therefore they indirectly lead to freedom.

—Swami Vivekananda

REVIEWS & NOTICES

RELIGIONS OF THE WORLD, Vol. I ; Published by the Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Ramakrishna Avenue, Patna 800-004 ; paperbound Souvenir ; 86 pages ; Rs. 10/- plus 2/- for postage.

Everyone is aware that by complacency—taking for granted the valuable things of life—those things decline, decay and are finally lost to us.

It is so with religious values and spiritual practice. Hence, the need always to carry on publishing, preaching and practising those values we want to keep alive. *Religions of the World, Part I*, is a fresh reminder of the beauty and importance of our religious heritage. In the low-priced, carefully arranged Part I of this very nice *Souvenir*, one gets short and pithy briefs on thirteen aspects of Hindu, Jain, Buddhist and Sikh religion. "Hindu Rituals", "Ways of the Tantras", a summary of the main tenets of the Six Systems of orthodox Hindu Philosophy, popular ideas and practices of Jainism, the importance of history, unity and love in Sikhism, the histories of the Brahmo Samaj movements, and a look into Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism in South India, are some of them.

Among the thirteen chapters are four by learned Swamis of the Order of Sri Ramakrishna. The Ashrama's Secretary, Swami Chandrananda, engaged a labour of love to bring out this first volume.

Strictly speaking, it has no price, but for an offering of Rs. 10/- plus 2/-, one can acquire it from the Patna Ashrama. Volume II will be published next year and include articles on Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Taoism, and other great spiritual movements of the people.

Swami Shivaprasadananda

BHARATIYA VIDYA, Vol. XLIX Nos. 1-4—a quarterly research organ of the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay.

This quarterly consists of many scholarly essays on Indian philosophy, history and Sanskrit literature.

NAROTTAM. Publishers: Ramakrishna Mission School, Narottam Nagar, Arunachal Pradesh, India ; January 1991.

The third issue of 'Narottam', with its splendid get up, contains a number of interesting short articles and poems by the students that reflect their blossoming thoughts. The Mission School has been doing signal service in the spread of education and developing all-round growth in the young tribal boys in this remote area.

S.M.

KAMAKOTI SHATHAKOTI: By Mudikonda Venkatarama Sastry (in Sanskrit), English translation by SHRI T. RAMALINGESHWARA RAO. Published by Ganga-Tunga Prakashan, 1423/9, 10th Main, Vijayanagar, Bangalore, 560-040, India, First Edition, 1990. Pp. xxxii plus 196. Rs. 25/-

This is a controversial book written in Sanskrit in 1963 by the learned author, Shri M. Venkatarama Sastry, and now translated into English to bring it to the notice of a larger circle of readers. It examines very minutely and critically the several Sanskrit Works published by or referred to as authority by the Kāmakoti Kumbhakṣam (Kānchi) Math to establish the claim of the Kānchi Kāmakoti Peetham as a Math founded originally by the Adi Shankaracharya himself, after founding the other four traditionally well known Maths in the four quarters of India at Badrināth, Dwāraka, Purī, and Shringerī, to supervise over them. It is also claimed that he lived the rest of his life at the Kānchi Math itself and passed away there.

The controversy seems to have started when in the *Panchāṅga* of *Prajotpati* year (1871) Siddhānti Subramanya Sastry of Bangalore published a *śloka* (Sanskrit verse) purporting that some people are respecting the Mathādhipati-s (Heads of Maths) of Kūḍlī, Kumbhakṣam, etc. considering them as disciples of the Shringeri Jagadguru-s. It is not known if the Shringeri Jagadguru-s made any such claim or it was only a general impression among people, since at that time

the Kānchi Kāmakoti Peetham and the Kumbhakoṇam Math were known only among a small circle of people in the South and were hardly known in North India. Very few thought that it was ever established by Adi Shankaracharya and that he passed his last days there. Well known traditional accounts mention only the four Maths started by Adi Shankaracharya and that he finally disappeared at Kedarnāth to go to Kailāsa. A monument has been set up at Kedarnāth to commemorate the event. Even now, mostly, this is the widely held belief, and the unusual name of 'Kāmakoti Peetham' also does not work in its favour, since all the other four Maths are known as Shankara Maths.

However, after the *Panchānga Śloka* appeared in 1871, the Kumbhakoṇam Math took steps to controvert the statement and, to establish its claims and the supremacy of the Kāmakoti Peetham, as the author points out, published a book entitled '*Siddhanta Patrika*' in Sanskrit in 1973, and later on a number of other books from 1897 onwards as authority, giving references to a few earlier Works which were not much in vogue before or were not available at all. The author has critically examined these publications and Works of reference and shown them to be mostly concocted and pointed out the purposeful tampering with some of the earlier Works suitable to support the establishment of their claims. He has dealt with some eighteen books, including reference Works, especially Anantānandagiri's '*Shankara Vijaya*', put forth by the Kāmakoti Kumbhakoṇam Math, examining over 100 (*shata*) points (*koṭi*-s) in them. Hence the title of the present book, '*Kāmakoti Shathakoṭi*'. The *Koṭi*-s are arranged under the following nine categories:

(1) Exposing false statements, (2) Exposing statements which do not carry the weight of authority; (3) Exposing misleading and deceitful statements; (4) Exposing statements made due to hallucination or delusion, confusion or perplexity, and unlearnedness; (5) Exposing concocted statements; (6) Exposing statements of distortion; (7) Exposing statements contradictory to one's own other statements;

(8) Exposing statements contradictory to statements in their other books of authority; (9) Exposing amazing statements.

The arguments marshalled are formidable and numerous, and the merits or demerits of these scholarly refutations may be judged by the intelligent people for themselves. No doubt, the appreciative attention of a wider circle of people, both in the South and the North, has been drawn to the Kānchi Math by the saintly life of the old and venerable Paramacharya, the present Head of the Kānchi Kāmakoti Peetham, who visited Varanasi in 1935 and was received with honour. Still, in view of these powerful criticisms, the Kānchi Kāmakoti Peetham should establish its claims by other reliable means rather than taking recourse to controversial Works, which were hardly known to tradition from earlier times before the Kumbhakoṇam Math projected them recently. For instance, to establish that the Kānchi Peetham existed from the time of Adi Shankaracharya, independent evidences may be produced such as from early epigraphy; ancient Governmental communications as to endowments etc.; well known donations and gifts from the public; the dealings of the Kānchi Math with the other four Maths in its supervisory capacity; outstanding Works written by the Heads or monks of the Kānchi Math in early times which have been well known to all; etc. It may also be pertinently questioned as to why the Adi Shankara has not mentioned in the *Mathāmnāya*-s made by him for the other four Maths that they should follow the guidance of the Kānchi Math. Is there any reliable evidence for the existence of the Anantānandagiri's '*Shankara Vijaya*', which differs on important points as to the parentage, place of birth, life span etc. of Adi Shankara from the generally accepted *Madhaviya Shankara Vijaya* and other long-standing traditions, and what is the date of its earliest extant manuscript?

We hope the effort to substantiate through controversial publications will be put to an end and the subject will be approached from the perspective of reliable historical evidence, since it is an important historical issue. It may also be noted that the greatness of a Math does not solely or even mainly rest on

whether Adi Shankara established it or a later Shankaracharya in comparatively recent times, but on how it has been conducting itself for the welfare of humanity and what it does for the propagation of the noble life and philosophy of the Great Shankara, who was *Loka-Shankara* (one engaged in the good of the whole world).

Swami Mukhyananda
Belur Math, (W.B.)

PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION, AN APPROACH TO WORLD RELIGIONS, BY A. R. MAHAPATRA. (Second Revised and Enlarged Edition) New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, Pvt. Ltd., (1990) 210 pages plus xiv ; Rs. 150/-.

There is a close relationship between philosophy and religion. The aim of philosophy is to interpret the world in terms of a rational systematisation of facts and values. Religion aims at the principle of unification and harmonisation through faith in the ultimate unity of man with God. But in the ancient world, there was no difference between philosophy and religion. A. R. Mahapatra, attempts in his book to elucidate the inter-relationship between philosophy and religion, and states that this can be observed in a particular branch of philosophy known as the Philosophy of Religion. The book is divided into two parts. Part I deals with the philosophical problems of religion, while Part II describes the ten important religions of the world.

In part I, A. R. Mahapatra gives a comprehensive analysis of the historical development of religion, and the philosophical problems associated with it. He discusses only the oriental aspect of religion, claiming that most of the great religions of the world such as Hinduism, Christianity, and Islam had their origin in the East. In this section, he takes analogies from Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism to trace the relationship between religion and morality. He deals with the use of symbols and myths in religion, the immortality of the soul, the problem of bondage and freedom, the problem of evil,

and the doctrine of Karma. Since the task of a philosophy of religion is to explain to the intellectual and rational aspect of man the fundamental truths of existence, Sri Mahapatra concludes most of these discussions with a critical analysis of the central premises of each doctrine. His approach is thus free from dogmatism and emotionalism.

However, in the chapter on "The Religious Experience," the author could have emphasised that the philosophy of religion must be based on religious experience. While philosophy is needed to discipline religion, religious knowledge comes through religious experience. Philosophy is theoretical, but religion is practical. A harmonious fusion of the two is needed to avoid excessive intellectuality on one side, and excessive credulity on the other.

In Part II, Mahapatra traces the origin and development of the important religions of the world. There is a comprehensive, but concise analysis of Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, Islam, Confucianism, and Taoism and Shintoism. The book is an able attempt to lay down the universal truths that bind all religions. If the fundamental truth of love, peace, unity, self-control and compassion is universally realised, then it can be the discipline on which can be laid the foundation of a new and spiritually enlightened world order. It is, as the author mentions in his preface, an introductory text in the philosophy of religion, for university students, scholars and general readers.

However, though the style is simple, it can be improved upon. The frequent typographical and grammatical errors (which can jar a sensitive reader) could have been avoided had a meticulous attention for detail been present in this "carefully revised and enlarged edition..." (p. ix). Besides, the organic link between Part I and Part II of the book remains nebulous. The well-prepared Glossary of Sanskrit terms, Bibliography and Index will, however, help to make the book useful to the discerning reader.

Dr. Rama Nair
Hyderabad

PRACTICAL SPIRITUALITY

...As he spoke Sri Ramakrishna manifested great spiritual fervour. He was in an ecstatic mood, talking to the Divine Mother.

A little later he said, "I am very happy to see these pictures of gods and goddesses. (in Nanda's house) He added: "It is not good to keep pictures of the terrible aspects of the Divine Mother. If one does, one should worship them."

PASUPATI (*smiling*): "Well, things will go on as long as She keeps them going."

MASTER: "That is true. But one should think of God. It is not good to forget Him."

NANDA: "But how little we think of God!"

MASTER: "One thinks of God through His grace."

NANDA: "But how can we obtain God's grace? Has He really the power to bestow grace?"

MASTER (*smiling*): "I see. You think as the intellectuals do: one reaps the results of one's actions. Give up these ideas. The effect of karma wears away if one takes refuge in God. I prayed to the Divine Mother with flowers in my hand: 'Here, Mother, take Thy sin; here, take Thy virtue. I don't want either of these; give me only real bhakti. Here, Mother, take Thy good; here, take Thy bad. I don't want any of Thy good or bad; give me only real bhakti. Here, Mother, take Thy dharma; here, take Thy adharma. I don't want any of Thy dharma or adharma; give me only real bhakti....'"

NANDA: "Can God violate law?"

MASTER: "What do you mean? He is the Lord of all. He can do everything. He who has made the law can also change it...."

NANDA: "Why has He assumed all these different forms? Why are some wise and some ignorant?"

MASTER: "It is His will."

ATUL: "Kedar Babu puts it nicely. Once a man asked him, 'Why has God created the world?' He replied, 'I was not present at the conference where God made the plans of His creation.'"

MASTER: "Oh! It is His sweet will."

So saying, the Master sang:

O Mother, all is done after Thine own sweet will;

Thou art in truth self-willed, Redeemer of mankind!

Thou workest Thine own work; men only call it theirs.

Thou it is that holdest the elephant in the mire;
Thou, that helpst the lame man scale the loftiest hill.

On some Thou dost bestow the bliss of Brahmanhood;

Yet others Thou dost hurl into this world below.

Thou art the Moving Force, and I the mere machine;

The house am I, and Thou the Spirit dwelling there;

I am the chariot, and Thou the Charioteer;
I move along as Thou, O Mother, movest me.

He continued: "The Divine Mother is full of bliss. Creation, preservation, and destruction are the waves of Her sportive pleasure. Innumerable are the living beings. Only one or two among them obtain liberation. And that makes Her happy...."

NANDA: "It may be Her sweet will; but it is death to us."

MASTER: "But who are you? It is the Divine Mother who has become all this. It is only as long as you do not know Her that you say, 'I', 'I'.

"All will surely realize God. All will be liberated. It may be that some get their meal in the morning, some at noon, and some in the evening; but none will go without food. All, without any exception, will certainly know their real Self."

from The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna

SWAMI TAPASYANANDAJI MAHARAJ

AN OBITUARY

We announce with a heavy heart the passing away of Srimat Swami Tapasyanandaji Maharaj, one of the Vice-Presidents of the Ramakrishna Math and the Ramakrishna Mission, at Madras on Thursday, 3 October 1991 at 6.32 pm. He was 87.

The Swami, known as K.P. Balakrishna Menon in his pre-monastic life, was born in 1904 in Ottapalam, Kerala. He was acquainted with the name and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna as a student of lower secondary class. In December 1924, he received initiation from Srimat Swami Shivanandaji Maharaj (Mahapurush Maharaj), one of the direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna and the second President of the Ramakrishna Order, at Madras Math.

After completing his M.A. he joined the Ramakrishna Order in 1926 at the Ramakrishna Mission Students' Home, Madras. His Guru initiated him into the vows of *Brahmacharya* in 1928 and named him Purnachaitanya. He was invested with *Sannyasa* by Mahapurush Maharaj in 1932 at Belur Math.

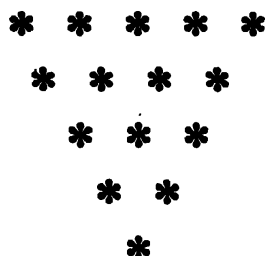
Swami Tapasyanandaji served the Ramakrishna Organization in various capacities. He was editor of the *Vedanta Kesari* (an English monthly of the Ramakrishna Order published from Madras since 1914). He became Head of the Ramakrishna Ashrama, Trivandrum in 1940 and worked there for three decades, upto 1971. In 1965 the Swami was elected a trustee of the Ramakrishna Math and a member of the Governing Body of the Ramakrishna Mission. He was appointed head of Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras in 1971 and continued in that position till his last. He was elected one of the Vice-Presidents of the Ramakrishna Math and the Ramakrishna Mission in 1985.

The Swami was greatly interested to spread the message of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda and Holy Mother. Under his guidance and encouragement many books were published in Tamil, Telugu, and English. He supported to popularize the Tamil journal *Sri Ramakrishna Vijayam*, which has now a circulation of nearly 60,000. Being an erudite scholar himself, the Swami's literary output has been immense. His English version of the *Srimad Bhagavatam* is one of his major contributions to the Order's literature. His translation of *Srimad Bhagavad Gita*, *Adhyatma Ramayana*, *Sundara Kandam*, *Narayaneeyam*, *Sankara Digvijaya*, *Kapilopadesa*, earned appreciation from all quarters. Besides translations he also published some original works. Of them, *Sri Sarada Devi*, *the Holy Mother*, *Swami Ramakrishnananda*, *The Four Yogas of Swami Vivekananda*, *The Nationalistic and Religious Lectures of Swami Vivekananda*, *The Philosophical and Religious Lectures of Swami Vivekananda*, *Bhakti Schools of Vedanta* deserve special mention.

In his passing away not only the Ramakrishna Order but also the country at large have sustained an irreparable loss. He leaves behind hundreds of initiated disciples and admirers to mourn his passing away.

May his soul rest in eternal peace.

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October 27, 1961

AN APPEAL FOR AN ORPHANAGE

Ramakrishna Mission Boys' Home, Rahara, is a branch centre of Ramakrishna Mission, Belur Math, which at present maintains 700 orphan, destitute & adivasi boys – 5 to 18 years old, entirely free of charge. The boys are all intelligent, hardworking and serious minded. Almost all of them who sat for the Madhyamik Examination not only secured first division marks, some even secured star marks. Those with little aptitude for academics are offered vocational training.

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We request our friends and sympathisers to come forward and strengthen our hands to do this noble service to the society by making a generous donation.

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Swami Jayananda
Secretary

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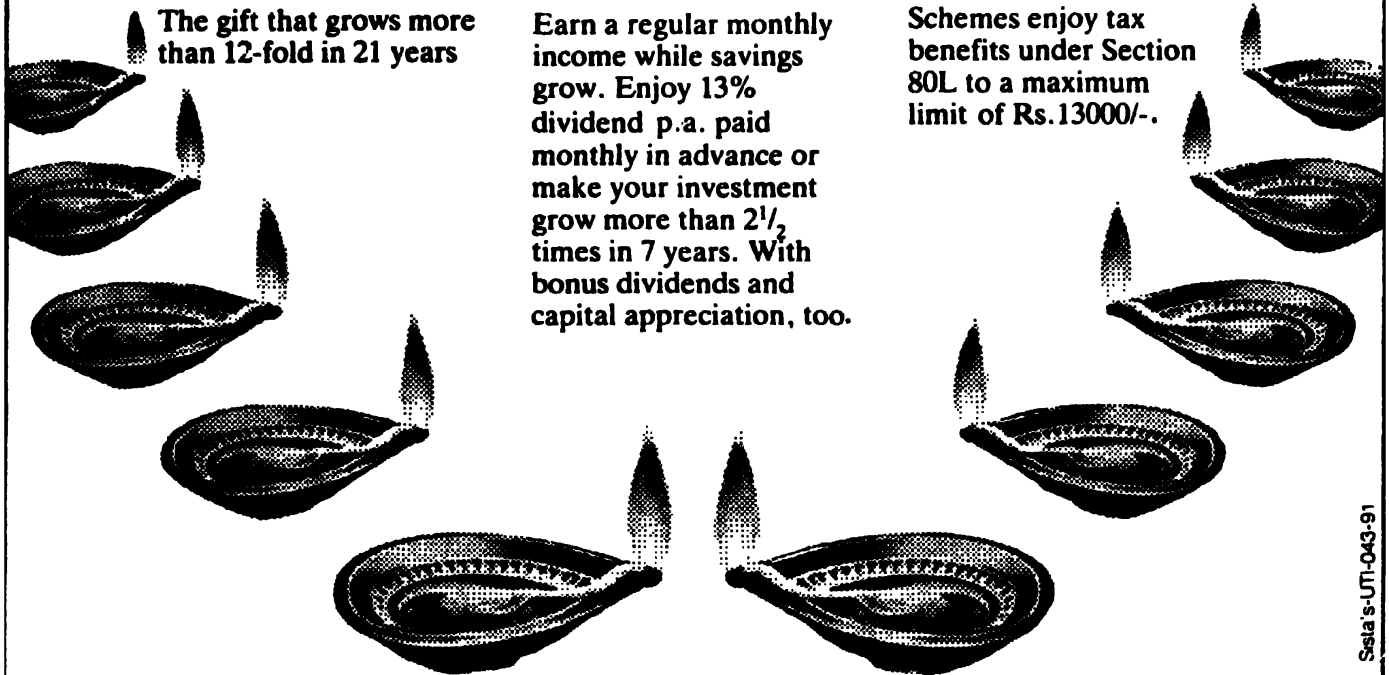
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A n A p p e a l

After the mahasamadhi of Bhagawan Sri Ramakrishna, His all renouncing disciples took shelter in a dilapidated house to the West of Baranagar Bazar, near the Ganga. Thus came into existence the 'Baranagar Math' with Narendrath (later Swami Vivekananda) as its leader. In course of time the old buildings of Baranagar Math fell into ruins, leaving behind two pillars of the main entrance as the mute witness of the glorious Baranagar Math days.

Baranagar Math stands as a metaphor for austerity. Inspired by the Master's life and teachings the monastic disciples of Sri Ramakrishna practised severe austerities here for about six years and the saga of which is a perennial source of inspiration to the monks of the Ramakrishna Order as well as the other monks.

A registered association styled as Baranagar Math Sanrakshan Samity set up in January 1973, acquired a portion of the land with a small building on it and on which stood the Baranagar Math the present address of which is 125/1 Pramanick Ghat Road, Calcutta-36. The Samity has taken up programme of service of God in man : it runs a charitable homoeopathic dispensary and a free coaching class for local poor students. Also, the monks of the Ramakrishna Order give regular discourses every week.

The accommodation available being insufficient for its expanding activities, the Samity has taken up a plan for extension of the existing building and some development activities at an estimated cost of Rs. 10 Lakhs. In fact, construction work on the first floor has already begun. The Samity appeals to all devotees, friends and admirers of the Ramakrishna movement to contribute liberally so that above-mentioned essential development work may be successfully accomplished.

Any contribution/donation to the Samity will be exempted from Income Tax under section 80-G of the Income-Tax Act, 1961. All donations to be sent and all correspondence to be made to the Samity's registered office at 37, Gopal Lal Tagore Road, Calcutta-700036. Cheques and drafts are to be drawn in favour of 'Baranagar Math Sanrakshan Samity'.

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Here in this blessed land, the foundation, the back-bone, the life-centre is religion and religion alone. In India, religious life forms the centre, the keynote of the whole music of national life. Let others talk of politics, of the glory of acquisition of immense wealth poured in by trade, of the power and spread of commercialism, of the glorious fountain of physical liberty; but these the Hindu mind does not understand and does not want to understand. Touch him on spirituality, on religion, on God, on the soul, on the Infinite, on spiritual freedom, and I assure you, the lowest peasant in India is better informed on these subjects than many a so-called philosopher in other lands.

So, in India, social reform has to be preached by showing how much more spiritual a life the new system will bring; and politics to be preached showing how much it will improve the one thing that the nation wants—its spirituality. Every man has to make his own choice; so has every nation.

—Swami Vivekananda

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* * *

Do not bother to know how your mind is reacting to things around. And do not waste time in calculating [about] and worrying whether...you are progressing in the path of spirituality. It is vanity to judge progress for oneself. Have faith in the grace of your guru and Chosen Ideal.

* * *

Be sincere in your practice, words, and deeds. ...God wants sincerity, truthfulness, and love. Outward verbal effusions do not touch Him.

* * *

All perform this or that discipline because they think it their duty to do so. But how many seek God? No doubt you must do your duties. It keeps one's mind in good condition. But it is also very necessary to practise japam, meditation, and prayer. ... Unless you practise meditation side by side with your work, how will you know whether you are doing the desirable or the undesirable thing?

* * *

One should not hurt others even by words. One must not speak even an unpleasant truth unnecessarily. By indulging in rude words one's nature becomes rude. One's sensitivity is lost if one has no control over one's speech.

* * *

The mind is everything. It is in the mind alone that one feels pure and impure. A man, first of all, must make his own mind guilty and then alone he can see another man's guilt. Does anything ever happen to another if you enumerate his faults? It only injures you. ...Forgiveness is a *tapasya*, helpful spiritual discipline.

* * *

If you want peace of mind, do not find fault with others. Rather see your own faults. Learn to make the whole world your own. No one is a stranger, my child; the whole world is your own.

* * *

Faith and firmness are the basic things; if faith and firmness are there, then you have it all.

Sayings of Holy Mother

Does Space Influence Mind ?

Sri Sarada Devi started from Calcutta a few weeks after the autumn worship of Durga and reached Banaras on the 5th November 1912. With her party she entered the Ramakrishna Advaita Ashrama and after a short rest went on to Lakshminivas, the newly built home in Varanasi of the Dattas of Calcutta. She stayed in Lakshminivas for about two and a half months with Golap-Ma, Nikunja Devi (M's wife), Radhu and a few others of her household. In expectation of the Mother's coming the owners had ceremoniously opened the house only a few days earlier. Mother was very happy to see the spaciousness of the living quarters. When she saw the wide verandah outside she remarked delightedly, "One must be fortunate to have such a spacious arrangement. Living in a small place one's mind also becomes small. In a spacious place, on the other hand, the mind also becomes expansive."¹

Holy Mother often retired to her native village after periods of stay in Calcutta. Calcutta even in those days was thoroughly congested and crowded. Streets and lanes were noisy, bazaars always humming, and living space was often cramped. Besides, free movement in and out of the house was not perfectly free, but was restricted due to traffic on the streets and to the hot humid weather which prevailed most of the time. And so many devotees came to the Mother's house every day.

The vast stretches of green paddy and sugarcane fields of Jayrambati were always a most welcome relief and change from Calcutta's busy atmosphere. Jayrambati's

tall shade trees, the fresh breezes, the abundance of fruits and flowers, and above all the relaxed and unhurried pace of life were rejuvenating. The free and open air, the bright blue sky stretching from horizon to horizon, cheerful faces and the laughter of healthy people in the overall closeness to nature made Jayrambati seem like a heaven on earth. The smooth flowing perennial brook, the Amodar, on the outskirts of the village even today adds to the charm of the rural setting. Here Holy Mother used to feel as happy as a young girl and she could move freely about the village talking and joking with companions she had known since her childhood. It is said that Sri Ramakrishna too used to feel free and lighthearted when he came back to Kamarpukur. Was it not because the unnatural restrictions of cities and towns are offensive to the innate free spirit of human beings ?

It appears that there is a close link between our minds within and space without. Though the influence is subtle and we may not be conscious of it, it is there. If we closely observe many of our moods and feelings, our thoughts seem to depend on the outer spacial surroundings we stay in. Physical space is an extension in which our physical bodies live and move. The buildings, factories, homes, mountains, rivers and forests occupy terrestrial space on our planet. Stars, planets, the sun, and the moon occupy celestial limitless space. Like the fish enveloped in the water of the ocean, we are also circumscribed by physical space. The moment we think of a person or a thing, naturally the mind visualizes the thing in terms of space. Directions like east, west, right, left, and above, below all denote spatial points. In common parlance we use

1. *Sri Sri Māyer Kathā* (Calcutta: Udbodhan Karyalaya, 1987) p. 281.

the word 'this building, or that ground is *spacious*'. We mean that they have an ample spacious quality about them.

The findings of neurobiologists at Berkeley University and elsewhere have supplied strong evidence that space exercises considerable influence on our emotions. In a large cage a few rats were kept. As long as there was plenty of space the animals behaved in a normal way. They played and frisked with each other happily. But when the scientists introduced more rats to overpopulate, as it were, the living space, a number of behavioural aberrations began to take place. First, activity began to decrease. Then the rats became restless, irritable and violent. Eventually the bigger animals started to kill the younger ones and even mothers did not spare their offspring. In that crowded cage aggressive and violent behaviour went on increasing everyday. Finally when the scientists removed some of the rats to different spacious cages, their behaviour again became normal. The experiment strongly suggests that the condition of our spacial surroundings exerts a powerful influence over human emotions and behaviour. Space exerts a salutary or disagreeable effect on the mind. Dr. Frank Brown of Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois suggest that "...man may be a more diversely sensitive creature, more subject to the invisible influences of the surrounding universe than Western science usually considers him."² Overpopulated cities, crowded dwellings, congested streets and roads bear ample testimony in support of this. It is poignantly borne out by statistical studies that the crime rate, murders, suicides, heart attacks, and senseless violence are far more prevalent in our big cities than in sparsely populated countrysides. Because

of inadequate space to live in and move freely, and noise and other kinds of pollution, human beings are compelled to endure constant stress and strain. In our overcrowded communities, in buses and trains, offices and public places, there is no space at all. Always one has to jostle with others for a little standing room. For a few days such an ordeal can be endured or accepted. But if one has to live for years in such an awful condition the result may be the deadening of one's sensitivities or a sense of unbearable frustration. Under constant strain it would be natural to expect the manifestation of some kind of anger or violence. Scientists who have been mapping the stress route from brain to heart say that there is a link between mind and heart. The increasing number of heart attacks are due to stress.

Quietness has a healing power. After days of toil the mind and body desperately need recuperation, which is only possible in calm surroundings and atmosphere. But such opportunity is denied to ordinary people in big cities where they live in small homes with large families. There is neither space inside or outside. There is neither privacy nor silence. The atmosphere resonates with traffic and other noises, and people's loud chatter. Always in such an uproarious environment it is no wonder the human mind becomes restless and disorderly, and often goes haywire. A disorderly mind is not only insensitive, but dull. Such shallow mind is concerned only with its survival, its hard struggles, anxieties and fears. Human beings brought up in such surroundings are forced to succumb to 'unkindness and unconcern for others' as a way of life. In cities many accidents take place. People are injured and die. But such tragic happenings fail to elicit human responses from busy passersby or to elicit any feelings in them. Human life becomes trifling and is not taken seriously. Hurrying home or to places of work is a

2. *The Nature of Human Consciousness*, Robert E. Ornstein, Editor (San Francisco: W.H. Freeman & Company, 1973) p. 439.

battle, indeed. Living and moving always in a sea of humanity dries up tender feelings of the heart.

Neurobiologists are clearly demonstrating that aggression and ruthlessness have neurochemical basis in our bodies. They have found that aggression in humans appears to be regulated by two neurotransmitters—*serotonin* and *norepinephrine*. The first acts as a tranquilizer and the second is excitatory. Aggression and violent behaviour produce high levels of *norepinephrine* and low levels of *serotonin*. The interesting thing is that Dr. Goodwin of the National Institute of Mental Health, in the U.S.A. believes that the neurotransmitter-aggression link is not necessarily genetic, but that one's environment can trigger physio-chemical imbalances. Mind does not exist in isolation. It exists in relation to interactions with the environment. Unplanned cities, population explosion, poverty and illiteracy are social phenomena, but have psychological consequences. Our minds are shaped by our natural and man-made environments. We cannot escape the effects of harsh reality.

In hospitals too, owing to lack of space, in poor communities hundreds of patients are sometimes found huddled together. In the absence of individual attention and care by doctors they languish and ultimately perish, neglected. The problem of space has assumed enormous proportion all over the world in recent times. The more well-meaning ethologists like Austrian, Konrad Lorenz, William Thorpe of Cambridge, Niko Tinbergen of Holland, have predicted doom as the result of overcrowding, and urged that the space race may be a way of channeling aggressiveness and sublimating suffering. In his absorbing article, "*Biological Rhythms*," Gay Luce remarks: "The human being is often treated as if he were—or should be—a constant system with homeostatic balance,

capable of great flexibility in dealing with exigencies outside."³

The surroundings in which a patient recovers from an illness can also be important. The following incident bears ample proof of this fact. A team of doctors and health experts recently renovated a Veterans' Administration Hospital, transforming it from a bleak building that merely housed patients in crowded colourless cubicles, into a bright, spacious and cheerful hospital. Doctors expected to see some improvement in the condition of their patients, but what they really saw astonished them. Suddenly everyone seemed to start recuperating. Within three months many of the patients who had been in the institution from three to ten years, not only got healthy enough to be discharged, but once discharged they were able to resume normal lives. "We have seen the importance of treating the sick person as a totality," says Dr. Jerome Frank, of John Hopkins School of Medicine, "not just as a body in need of repair. This unified system of healing should be our goal."⁴ This new approach is called holistic medicine.

What is the fate of educational institutions? Are there any signs of change for the better? Unfortunately, except for a few good institutions, most will remain in the same lamentable plight, heart-rending though it may be. Crowded nursery schools situated in bleak small buildings with no space to spare present a pathetic sight. Young children are pushed as if into strait-jackets. When school classrooms lack sufficient space, the demand for spacious playgrounds for young students becomes a costly luxury. Classrooms when overflowing with pupils are noisy and in many of our urban centres, in such a condition our teachers can do

3. *Ibid.* p. 443.

4. Charles Panati, *Breakthroughs* (London: MacMillan, 1980) p. 19.

everything except teach. Without healthy happy teacher-pupil relationships, education has no meaning. Such conditions prevailing, that is why there is a large turning towards correspondence courses in India. Teachers can be dispensed with. If students cannot have large classrooms and grounds sufficient to satisfy the need for physical activity, what is the utility of schools ? We all know that the brain needs for its healthy growth blood and oxygen. Sports, games, and physical exercise are absolutely necessary. It goes without saying that space is essential for life. In our overpopulated cities this appears to be a remote dream.

Is intelligence solely determined by genes and heredity or is it partly dependent on environment ? Scientists are still divided. But there is undeniable truth in the view that environment does play an important role. This is supported by the research and experimental results of Drs'. Mark Rosenzweig and Albert Globus of the University of California, and of Krech and Bennet at Berkeley. To evaluate the effects of different kinds of environment on the brains of rats they placed some in standard laboratory group cages, and others in a large spacious cage outfitted with a variety of toys. The rats in the latter 'enriched' environment had plenty to do, ropes to climb, wheels to turn, and room to move and play freely in a large area. After a few weeks their brains were dissected. The first group showed less neurological development, i.e. less intelligence. In the second group the scientists discovered more brain development—an increased number of dendritic spines and nerve-cell connections—possible causes for enhanced learning capacity and memory.⁵

Our universities and colleges have turned into virtual battlegrounds of political agita-

tions and reckless violence. Students are restless and the slightest provocation sparks them into explosive behaviour. There might be other causes for this volatile behaviour, but it cannot be denied that the stifling environment in which they grow and learn has its effect.

The Upaniṣads and ancient epics tell us about the ancient *gurukula system* of India, and the spacious forest universities. These *gurukulas* were *āśramas* situated in forests at sites of natural beauty. They sometimes occupied vast areas of land with thick woods, tall trees, flowing streams, calm atmosphere and no morbid distractions. There developed sweet loving relationships between teachers and pupils, which fostered confidence and trust and made these places of learning ideal institutions. It is said that even the fierce animals of the forest used to become tame and gentle in those surroundings. Above all, there was a certain amount of healthy austerity that was practised by the students and teachers. They lived a simple life-style devoid of ostentation and luxury, and while in the university, there was for the time being, perfect equality between students of rich and poor families and background. Destructive tendencies and psychological problems were noticeably absent. These forest universities were, therefore, ideal places for serious academic pursuit and spiritual quest. It is perhaps why in ancient India there were great strides made in all kinds of material and spiritual learning and culture. The lofty thoughts of the Vedas and Upaniṣads, and the ancient philosophies were born in such elevating environment close to nature.

What is the life of modern man in the age of electronics and high-tech gadgetry ? Concern over 'self and survival' have become an obsession, sapping the energy and devouring enthusiasm and zest. Titillation of nerves, petty entertainments and addiction

5. Richard M. Restak, *The Brain—The Last Frontier* (New York: Warner Books, 1979) pp. 124-25.

to alcohol and narcotics have vitiated the atmosphere. There is shallow pleasure but not happiness, self-forgetfulness but not self-control and mastery, gratification but not fulfilment, momentary enjoyment but not bliss. Such insensitive human beings destroy but can never create. Our films, literature and art forms all reflect sensuality.

The saddest part is that the younger generation has been nourished and brought up exclusively in such environment. They have, therefore, not been taught or trained to recognize or appreciate the higher things of life. The pure joy of being one with nature has been replaced with flimsy amusements. Modern man has no leisure or opportunity to look beyond the towering buildings at the bright stars in the evening sky, to enjoy the poetry of the soft moonlight or the sound of sweetly singing birds, or other natural joys due to the blare of vehicles, televisions and radios. Rather he must be content with viewing the natural beauties on the silver screen. In cities there is no space for trees, or woods, or parks or green lawns. Modern man has been paying heavily psychologically for this deprivation. The taut nerves, anxieties, anger, restlessness, and so on are the hallmarks of our highly civilized human society!

Sri Ramakrishna used to advise world-weary devotees to retire now and then to solitary places and meditate. Peace is the Golden Fleece, none has found it in the noisy busy world. It has to be discovered in oneself in an environment of quietude. It is a fact that a few days of retirement to a forest cabin or to a solitary place of scenic beauty refreshes the tired mind and its cathartic power unburdens the heart of all pent-up strong emotions. Only a quiet mind can release the shining light of the Soul that lies within. Space, therefore, is a powerful

factor. It can either contract or expand our mental horizons.

Emphasizing the importance of physical surroundings the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* says: "Let spiritual practices be done in a clean and level place protected from high wind, free from pebbles, gravel and fire, undisturbed by the noise of water or market-booths, and which is delightful to the mind and not offensive to the eye" (II. 10). *Kurma Purāṇa* mentions also 'jantuvyapta' (infested by wild animals), and *śaśabda* (noisy) places as unfitting for spiritual exercises. The World Health Organization has published several research papers on the ill-effects of noise pollution on the body and mind. Ulcers, insomnia, irritability, loss of memory and deafness are some of the punishments that noise administers. In affluent countries people are running away from busy cities and settling down in quiet rural areas. The great thinker of America, Henry Thoreau, aptly remarked, "I never found a companion that was so companionable as solitude."

Population pressure, unplanned growth of our cities, indiscriminate expansion of industrial areas have swallowed up much space. Whether problems are social or economic, they always have their repercussions on the mental life of the people. Environment and man go together. In large families children often are neglected. But undernourishment in early life permanently handicaps brain development. The damage, neurobiologists say, is irreversible. It should be remembered that while solving economic issues we often create psychological problems. Human beings are complex. Only with the holistic approach can studies be made from different co-related angles with a sense of proportion so that true and lasting solutions can be found.

A National Language for India

SWAMI MADHAVANANDA

This incisive essay by the ninth President of the Ramakrishna Order (August 1962 to October 1965), first appeared in the May 1930 issue of this Journal. Six decades after, we Indians are still nowhere near a solution. Will we ever find one ?*

One of the things that strike one forcibly on return from a trip to a foreign country like the United States of America is the diversity of tongues obtaining in this country. Over a dozen languages, each with a more or less developed literature of its own, divide among themselves the allegiance of three hundred and twenty millions of people. The persistence of this 'Babel' of tongues is all the more striking because the country is culturally one. Europe, too, has a great many languages, but it is a continent, and there is nothing strange in each country having its own language. But the existence of so many languages within the same country is a great hindrance to the progress of national unity. It subconsciously engenders prejudice in the minds of people speaking a certain tongue against those who speak a different tongue. The object of this article is to suggest some remedy for minimizing the evils which are due to the multiplicity of languages in India. The subject may not be new, but at this time of national awakening it is worthwhile to go over the ground to see whether we can find out a common language for India or not. By a common language I mean one that will serve as the medium of interprovincial communication, a language by means of which the residents of one part of the country can exchange their views with their brothers and sisters in another part. Nothing more than this is possible now, because each of the dozen languages is old and, as already said, has a literature of its own. It is neither possible, nor is it desirable, to stamp out any language under such circumstances. What then are we to do ? We are to find out what language will best serve the purpose of the inter-provincial language we need so badly in India. Such a language must have a copious and comprehensive vocabulary capable of expressing ideas in the different fields of life, and possess withal a more or less rich literature. Here one may ask, 'Have we not already in English a language which is just doing this function ?' The answer is that though English does this function in certain respects among the educated sections, yet it has some serious disadvantages which will for ever preclude any attempt to install it as the national language for India. The first drawback of English is that it is not an indigenous language of India. As such it has to be laboriously acquired. And everyone with some experience knows how many patient years of toil are needed before familiarity with the language is gained. Contrast this with some of the existing Indian languages. How much easier is it to learn them ! The curse of a foreign language is that every single word of it has to be committed to memory, and as everybody knows, English idioms are a difficult study for an outsider. And as to English pronunciation, it is simply hopeless. As against this let us take up an Indian language, say Hindi. The very fact that Hindi is spoken by over one hundred and twenty millions of people, that is, nearly two-fifths of the entire population, naturally brings us into contact with it in season and

out of season. We are more or less familiar with its words and sounds. Moreover it has a simple grammar which, in spite of its exaggerated difficulties about one or two things to which I shall presently refer, is very easy to learn. And, what is of prime importance it is phonetic. It is also a language which is pre-eminently adaptive, and has a wonderful capacity—in common with most of the Indian vernaculars—for expressing religious and philosophical ideas, the thing which is India's special province. It has also a very rich poetical literature and a fast developing prose literature too. All these things should at once give Hindi a predominance over English, no matter how rich the latter is in literature. The treasures of English literature will be beyond the reach of the rank and file of the Indian people unless they can have a sufficient command over the language, which it will take them years to do. The dream of certain enthusiasts that Indian children will readily pick up English if they hear it spoken in their nursery, will never materialize in India, for the simple reason that there will never be available a sufficient number of English people to form the required background to the Indian home-life. On the contrary, there are a hundred times more chances for an Indian language, Hindi for instance, to be so wide-spread in the land as to be imbibed with the mother's milk by every Indian child. The odds against English are overwhelming.

There are indeed people who are so convinced of the importance of English as a world language that they cannot think how any other language can be the national language of India. I refer them to countries like Japan, or France, or Germany. They do not use English as the common speech, but are just as fully alive to what is going on in the world, by having the latest books on science or philosophy or literature transla-

ted into their own tongue. It is thus only that the millions can get into touch with the best thoughts of other countries in a short time. Of course France or Germany has English-speaking groups. India too will have them. They will be our specialists in that line. English will remain as one of the second languages in the country to be learnt at option. That is all. But that does not prevent Hindi or any other equally suitable Indian language being the national language of India. From whatever angle we look at the question, English cannot stand in comparison with any of these Indian languages as regards the ease with which it can be acquired and spoken *en masse*.

Now let me explain why I claim for Hindi advantages over any other Indian language. Why should we not choose Bengali, which is as easy to learn as Hindi, and much richer in literature, or Marathi, which comes next in order? Why not take up Tamil, that great language of Southern India, which is so ancient and so very rich in literature? The answer is, we must choose that language which is easy to learn, easy to pronounce, is widely spoken, is capable of great adaptability, and is rich in literature. If we consider all these five points, we shall see that Hindi's claims are the highest. As regards the first and last points, Bengali scores over Hindi. It is learnt more quickly because of its simpler grammar, and it has a very rich literature. Regarding this last point it yields place, if at all, only to Tamil. But Bengali pronunciation is difficult compared with Hindi, which is phonetic. Students of Northern India who have learnt Bengali through the eye, find great difficulties in speaking it correctly. They read and understand, but they cannot speak Bengali. The colloquial forms of expression are different from the literary forms, which makes it so hard for non-Bengalees to speak correct Bengali. In fact, they are so conscious of

their defects in this matter that they do not often dare to speak it for fear of exciting ridicule. So Bengali cannot be the language we are seeking for. I have conceded, that Bengali has a richer literature than Hindi, but let it be remembered that the poetical literature of Hindi is vast and exceedingly rich, although slightly more difficult. Marathi and Gujarati are even more difficult than Hindi, because of their three genders, more or less arbitrary, instead of two, as in Hindi. Tamil is very much more difficult, specially as regards pronunciation, which every outsider can testify to. As regards the second point, Hindi, in common with Marathi and Gujarati has advantages over Bengali or any Southern language. While as regards the third point, extensity, it easily has the first place in India, with Bengali following at a distance. With reference to the fourth point, viz. adaptability, Hindi yields to no other Indian language. So taking all things together Hindi fulfils most of the conditions that a national language in India should satisfy.

There is another point to consider. All the great North Indian languages are derived from Sanskrit. This is the reason why any one of them can be easily acquired by those who speak the cognate languages. All of them open the door to the vast cultural wealth which Sanskrit, 'the language of the gods', possesses more than any other language of the world. And it is impossible to overemphasize this point, for we, Indians, must always draw our inspiration from this inexhaustible mine of ancient treasures. Three of the four Southern languages, viz. Telugu; Canarese and Malayalam, too, have a large percentage of Sanskrit words in them. And for this reason no Southerner, except the Tamilian, will find it difficult to learn Hindi. On the other hand, a Northerner who wishes to learn Tamil or any other Southern language, knows how much more

laborious it is for him than it is for his Southern brothers to learn his own. I make bold to say that one born and brought up in Southern India, even a Tamilian, and possessing an average culture will be able to pick up Hindi in six months or even earlier. This should effectively silence those who oppose the idea of Hindi being chosen as the national language of India. Does not English exact fifty times more labour? One may question this statement by pointing to the perplexities of Hindi gender. But on closer scrutiny the subject will not appear so formidable as one thinks. There is method in its madness. French in spite of the same handicap is the continental language of Europe. Yet Hindi verbs, notwithstanding their complication with gender, are much easier than French verbs. The position of French as a continental language is a settled fact, and nobody demurs to it, while objections are raised against Hindi on the ground of difficulty, simply because it is a new-comer in the field. With a little familiarity the outstanding advantages of Hindi will be patent to one and all. Its association with the *Devanagari* script is another point in its favour, which links it up with Sanskrit. Moreover, Urdu, the language of Indian Mohammedans, is but a variant of Hindi. Therefore, since Hindi has so many outstanding advantages and can be learnt so easily, it is not wise to raise objections against its use as the national language of India, specially when national interests are at stake. Let me repeat that not one of the existing vernaculars of India will be cast aside. They will continue to be spoken just as they are, in the provinces. All we want is that Hindi should be made the medium of an interchange of views between one province and another. I have already said that English will remain as an optional language. It will lose its present position no doubt, but that

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Sri Sarada Devi

V. GOPINÁTHAN

Some dissimilarities between Yasodhara, wife of Buddha, and Sri Sarada Devi are discussed in this interesting article. The author is from Kerala.

There are points of similarity in the lives of Gautama Buddha and Sri Ramakrishna in many respects, even in their approaches to the Supreme Truth or God, and both of them renounced the worldly life in the prime of their youth. Yet one was born in the lap of luxury in an exalted royal family, while the other was born in the home of an ordinary Brahmin family, amidst prayers and worship and the chanting of hymns and praises of God. Siddhartha was brought up in affluence and plenty, surrounded by worldly enjoyments, whereas Sri Ramakrishna was a lotus that grew up in a clear pool of renunciation and spirituality. Though it may appear to some that their lives were poles asunder, no doubt their goal was one and the same.

But when we consider the role of their partners-in-life, we take note of a gulf of differences and divergent natures. The way in which Yasodhara came into the life of Siddhartha and the unique appearance of Sarada in the life of Sri Ramakrishna are altogether unlike each other. When we contrast the two we can at once discern the great dissimilarity.

It was with the intent of holding back the mind of Siddhartha from being carried away on a wave of detachment and aversion to worldly enjoyment that Suddhodana, the king of Kapilavastu, arranged for the wedding of his son Siddhartha with the extremely beautiful princess Yasodhara. We know he succeeded in that purpose to some extent, for Siddhartha was infatuated with the stunning beauty of Yasodhara and enjoyed

the bliss of his marriage for many years. Finally, when Rahula his only son was born the clutches of Mahāmāyā were loosened and Siddhartha could come to his senses and into the consciousness of his great mission. Not only Yasodhara had no part to play in this vital turning-point, but she had not even an inkling of the great storm that raged in the mind of her beloved husband. Completely bound up in the pleasurable sense life of the royal court that she was, Yasodhara could not even remotely understand the true nature of Siddhartha. And what was the sequel? It was poignant heartache and severe shock at the deserting of herself and her child by Siddhartha. She could only shed tears over the callous (as it seemed to her) desertion of herself in the prime of her youth and her infant. She looked with misty eyes at the tender babe nursing at her breast and thought over the responsibility of bringing him up without the encouraging presence of his father. Only later on, when Siddhartha came back as the enlightened Buddha, Yasodhara's eyes were opened to the great reality. Then, chaste and devout lady as she was, Yasodhara placed herself at the feet of that Sannyasin Lord of hers and implored him to accept her as a humble disciple. Though with great reluctance at first, Buddha yielded to her wish eventually. Thus, only in the last days of their relationship as *guru* and *śiṣya*, Yasodhara got a glimpse of the light of the greatness of the Holy Beloved in her own heart. Thereafter Yasodhara became a model partner-in-life of the great Lord of Men and followed the noble Dharma. She dedicated herself to the furthering of

the great mission of the Buddha. Certainly Yasodhara underwent a great transformation in mind and spirit. But the credit of that transformation goes entirely to Gautama Buddha, the spiritual Luminary. Yasodhara was only the moon reflecting the glorious light of the sun, Buddha.

But Sarada Devi's life was entirely different from that of Yasodhara. For, she was married to Sri Ramakrishna at the tender age of five, before she was able to think and judge for herself. It was when she reached a mature age that she heard for the first time about her husband, that he was a crack who remained always immersed in contemplation of God. Yasodhara could enjoy a warm though short-lived married life with her loving husband, Siddhartha. But to Sarada Devi from the very outset a bitter cup offered itself. Yet how effortlessly, how contentedly and with what calm resignation did she take that cup of life! Not only so, but she was unperturbed by the gossip and rumours of worldly persons regarding her husband, for she knew intuitively that her Lord was a divine and extraordinary person of exalted mind. She felt herself blessed being his partner-in-life, and could rise to the occasion as required, even from her young age. Though not educated in the schoolish sense, she knew she had a part to play in his great mission. Sarada Devi could not, of course, serve Sri Ramakrishna in his physical form throughout her own life. But she partook of all the likes and dislikes of her husband while he yet lived in his body, shared all his joys and sorrows, and was a helpmate in his spiritual ministrations. She silently and devotedly served the Master in all ways. And after the passing away of Sri Ramakrishna she took upon herself his unfinished work, guiding innumerable earnest souls, managed her own large household, and nurtured the fledgling Ramakrishna Order. The very incarnation of renunciation.

Sarada Devi ascended the mighty steps of service to God in humanity which could not even be dreamt of by Yasodhara.

Yasodhara enjoyed the life of wife and mother for about twelve years. Any woman blessed with youth and beauty wishes to fulfil these two dreams. Sarada Devi too was eminently and bountifully graced with both youth and beauty by God. Like Śakti to Śiva, Sarada Devi could have, if she had wanted, easily transformed Sri Ramakrishna into *Ardhanārīśvara*. (Lord Śiva is so called because half of his body was given over to his consort Pārvatī.) But she didn't make even a show of an attempt at that, for she was fully conscious of the great world mission of the Master. Sri Ramakrishna himself had avowed the truth of this on one occasion. Had it not been for Sarada's hearty cooperation, it is doubtful whether Sri Ramakrishna could have succeeded in the upward turning of his soul in complete surrender to God.

It is perhaps the dream of all married women to hold a handsome baby at the breast and to be cheered by its growing up to accomplished adulthood. When Sarada Devi's old mother wept that her daughter would never have the fortune of being addressed as 'Mother' by her own offspring (being married to a *sannyāsin* who practised absolute continence), Sri Ramakrishna told her thus: "Your daughter (Sarada) will have so many sons (in the spiritual sense) that she will become tired of hearing the repeated calls of 'Mother, Mother.'" But as we know, Sarada Devi somehow excelled this prediction of her husband. She never tired of the repeated calls of 'Mother' by her devoted countless sons and daughters. Each call of 'Mother' by her spiritual children strengthened her resolve to serve the Lord with determination, renunciation and love.

Yasodhara joined the institution started by Buddha and worked for the noble cause

to the end of her life. Nevertheless, she contributed nothing original. She only followed the footsteps of Buddha who had set everything right. But Sarada Devi inherited the stupendous task of erecting a great mansion out of nothing, so to say, except the single stone laid by Sri Ramakrishna. Of course, she was ably assisted by the monastic and lay disciples of the great Master, who did not spare themselves in the work. Still, it was a great and onerous responsibility for a young widow like Sarada Devi, who was compelled to work amidst grown-up men, some of whom were older than herself. And she had to lift them up with herself to the heights of spirituality. One can easily guess the predicament she was placed in. Without any resources at her disposal, Sarada Devi had to concentrate on the Feet of the Blessed Lord and pray fervently for His assistance in all matters. One is thrilled to remember the momentous things she managed with her meagre means.

Some entertain the erroneous idea that Sarada Devi was relegated to the background while Sri Ramakrishna was alive, and lived a hidden if not neglected existence as a housewife. But nothing can be further from the truth. Sarada Devi was incessantly active even then, only it was behind a curtain, as it were. Every movement and saying of Sri Ramakrishna brought to surface the latent power of Sarada Devi. Like *Mahā*

Viṣṇu before *Ādi Śakti* (the Primordial Power), Sri Ramakrishna was enacting and unfolding a divine drama of devotion, ecstasy and samādhi in propitiation of the great goddess Sarada Devi. He was fully aware of her greatness as the Mother of the Universe, capable of blessing one and all. That was why he selected her as his consort. Immaculate, beautiful, and purity incarnate, Sarada Devi was sanctified by her relation to Sri Ramakrishna like the Divine Mother was with Lord Siva. Sarada Devi, the incarnation of Śakti, came down on earth to make people realize the sublimity of the 'Śiva-Śakti union'.

It was with great reluctance that Gautama Buddha enrolled Yasodhara in his band of disciples. Truly, as he feared, these women inmates in time became responsible for the decay and degeneration of monastic Buddhism and paved the way for Buddhism's decline within a few hundred years after Buddha's death.

But it was the Holy Mother, Sarada Devi herself who laid the foundation of the Sri Ramakrishna Movement, resting it on the concept of the universal motherhood of God. The holy '*Tapasvini*' (Ascetic-Mother) that she was, Sarada Devi through her life's example showed the way to both sannyāsins and householders.

Why should my sons lack food? They shall not. I myself prayed to the Master, "O Master, may your sons never suffer for want of food."

—Holy Mother

Child Krishna of Guruvayur

A. VISWANATHAN

The Lord becomes the servant of His own devotees. There is no end to His play. The touching story is told by Sri Viswanathan, who is the Dean of the Training Institute of Indian Railways in Secunderabad.

In the Gita (Ch. VII, verse 21), Shri Krishna tells Arjuna :

*Yo yo yām yām tanum bhaktāḥ
śraddhayā arcitum icchati
tasya tasyācalām śraddhām
tāmeva vidadhāmyaham*

I give unswerving faith unto each devotee who seeks to worship with faith, Me, in whatever form of Mine he chooses.

Many are the ways in which devotees take delight in worshipping the Lord. A most delightful way of approaching the Lord is with an attitude of parental tenderness and affection towards Him. In this too, most fortunate is that devotee, who can look upon Shri Krishna as a mother would on her own infant. A mother seeks nothing from her infant. She only gives and gives. There is only love, ennobled by tenderness and reinforced by strength. There is no egoism, no expectation of boons and blessings. It is sacrifice, with no thought about the self. Like the mother towards her infant, the devotee is blessed with a continuous awareness of the Lord. The great Yaśodā reigns supreme in such love for her Krishna. Hers is pure love, and there is no intellectual sophistication in it. Such love elevates the devotee spiritually, and makes a captive of the Lord. The *Nārāyaṇīyam* describes it beautifully:

*Nipāyayantī stanam anagāṁ tvām
vilokayantī vadanam hasantī,
daśām Yaśodā katamām na bhaje
saḥ tādṛśaḥ, pāhī Hare! gadād mām!*

Feeding breast to Thee who had climbed onto her lap, looking at Thy beautiful visage and smiling at Thee, to what heights of ecstasy did not Yaśodā rise! Mayst that Thou, O Hari, save me from my afflictions! (D. 41 v. 10).

The enchanting Child Krishna of Guruvayur (Kerala) continues to draw unto Himself, irresistably, many great devotees. Among the most remarkable was Kurūramma (1570-1640 A.D.). She belonged to a small village near Paravur in the then Travancore State. As was the custom then, as a young girl she was married into the Kurūr Namboodiri household (or 'Illom'). Being the eldest bride, in course of time she became matriarch of the family, known by the name Kurūramma. Those whom the Lord loves, He ensures that they do not develop distracting ties toward the world. And so, before she could become a mother, Kurūramma became a widow.

Without a child of her own, Kurūramma began to look upon the infant Krishna as her child. She was no poet or savant. Intellectually, she was an ordinary person, and always resorted to only one verse of the *Nārāyaṇīyam* whenever she meditated on the Lord:

*Komalam kūjayan venum
syāmaloyam kumarakah
veda vedyam param brahma
bhāsatām purato mama*

The One who makes beautiful music from His flute, the Dark-hued One, the One

who is Himself the Param Brahma, the Ultimate Truth, extolled in the Vedas, may that celestial Young One appear before me in all His resplendence!

As Kurūramma advanced into old age, she became, day by day, weak and helpless with no one to take care of her. One day, after visiting the Lord in Guruvayur temple, she came back and sat down in the front of her house, utterly exhausted, and wearily uttering the Lord's name in her distress. Immediately thereupon, a handsome young boy came from a distance, saying that he was just passing by and had heard someone calling him by name, and could he help her in any way? Kurūramma in her innocence was none the wiser about the boy's identity. She talked to him about her troubles and asked if he would fetch her some water. The young boy set about to fulfil her wish with alacrity. Thereafter, to the delight of the old lady, he went on and completed all the remaining household tasks.

From that day it became a regular duty with him to turn up at her house every morning and help the blessed lady with her household tasks. In return, she would reward him with some sweetmeats or a plantain, even as a mother would do for her own child. Whenever the youngster was around, Kurūramma felt an indescribable joy. She would spend her time laughing and playing with him. She would fondle him and whenever he committed some mischief, she would, like a mother, reprimand him. She found that if the boy was absent for any length of time she would be plunged into the depths of loneliness and gloom. After a long association with her young helpmate, the bond of Kurūramma's affection for him developed into mysticism, and all her other bonds to the world were severed. Kurūramma's mind was simple and unsophisticated: she knew *bhakti*, the love of the Lord, and only that. Once, when a person asked

her why she, a woman, committed the impropriety of doing '*Nārāyaṇa Japam*' at all times round the month without interruption, her reply was simply "that Yama, the Lord of Death, when He comes, does not grant even a moment's reprieve. Ready or no, one has to go."

Another great devotee, a contemporary of Kurūramma, was the saint Vilvamangala. To him too, Shri Krishna used to appear every day. Vilvamangala, however, was inclined to ritualism in his worship of Shri Krishna, and had his preconceptions regarding the conduct required of a good devotee.

When Shri Krishna appeared to Vilvamangala everyday, He used to receive the holy man's offerings in the *pūjā*. Vilvamangala used to be aware that the Lord was bestowing His special grace on him. There are many stories about the lessons that Vilvamangala used to have from the Lord on the superior nature of egoless *bhakti*.

Once there was an old brāhmin who suffered from severe pain in his stomach. Hearing about Vilvamangala, and that he used to converse with the Lord everyday, as a last resort he came to him. He requested Vilvamangala to find a way to cure him of his ailment. For reply, Vilvamangala had only doses of philosophy to offer. He told the brāhmin that it was not possible for any person to escape the result of his own sins, either of the present or of previous lives. The only way was for him to endure his affliction and pain. Hearing it, the old man departed in great dejection, not knowing what to do next. Greatly distressed and utterly exhausted, he dragged himself to where Kurūramma was residing. He hardly knew anything of her greatness or devotion to God. When Kurūramma saw the old brāhmin at her doorstep, she rushed to give him comfort. She asked him to wash and sit for his meal, and began to lay out a

fresh plantain leaf for him with all kinds of delicious food. Watching her and seeing the food deepened the old man's anguish all the more. He told Kurūramma about his stomach trouble and that even the great Vilvamangala had not been able to intercede with the Lord to get him cured. However, as Kurūramma continued to insist, he had to sit down and try to eat. Much to his surprise, he suddenly found that all his pain vanished. Joyfully then, he proceeded to enjoy his meal, as never before for a long time. In due course, as intended by the Lord, the news of this happening reached Vilvamangala. The great devotee realized that he had never totally surrendered himself to the Lord.

On another occasion Kurūramma requested Vilvamangala to accept *bhikṣā*, the alms due to begging mendicants, from her home on a particular day. He agreed, but after a few days forgot all about his promise. On the appointed day, when Kurūramma went to the temple tank for her bath, she came to know from an aristocratic lady, also bathing there, that the latter was herself expecting the holy man to come to her house that day for his *bhikṣā*. This was a great shock to the pious and simple Kurūramma. She knew that she stood nowhere near this aristocratic lady to whom Vilvamangala was going, so she returned to her home lamenting her ill-luck.

It is customary in Kerala when a sannyāsi starts out on a journey, for a disciple of his to sound a conch to denote the auspicious moment. In this instance, when Vilvamangala started from his hermitage towards the noble woman's home, though the disciple tried to sound the conch as was usual with him, he could not get any sound out of it, however much he tried. Immediately Vilvamangala stopped to think, and it flashed into his memory that he had earlier given his promise to visit Kurūramma. Full

of regret for his lapse, he directed his entourage to the house of Kurūramma instead. Suddenly the disciple found that he could sound the conch.

On arriving at Kurūramma's place the great Vilvamangala was pleasantly surprised to see that excellent arrangements had been hastily prepared for the *pūjā* that precedes the taking of *bhikṣā*. And that the old lady was being assisted in this by a very comely looking young boy. As Vilvamangala commenced the worship and offered *tulasi* leaves at the feet of the idol of Shri Krishna, he found that each leaf of *tulasi* would instead fall at the feet of that young boy, who all the while was standing by the side of Kurūramma, watching with a faint smile on his lips. At first a trifle annoyed, he looked at the boy once again with his inner eye, and found standing in front of him was none other than Shri Krishna Himself, in all His resplendent beauty. Thus, once again a wise revelation came to him. That simple devout lady was so close to the Lord that He condescended to perform household chores for her!

Vilvamangala was himself known to be a sufferer from a gastric ulcer. However, he would perform the daily *pūjā* to the Lord, and only after Shri Krishna would actually appear and partake of the food offering, would the saint partake of it himself. One day he waited for long, but Shri Krishna was not to be seen. The acute pain of the stomach ulcer was beginning to make itself felt, and in anxiety and physical discomfort Vilvamangala began to pace restlessly back and forth between the entrance and the shrine, impatient for the Lord to appear. By evening Shri Krishna was seen to come running, breathless and covered with dust and dirt. Intimate devotee that he was, Vilvamangala proceeded to scold the Lord for delaying and for making him suffer so much. Replying, Shri Krishna told the devotee that He

was helpless. As He had unwittingly committed some mischief—capricious Child that He was!—while performing some household task at Kurūramma's house, she had got so annoyed with Him that she imprisoned Him by over-turning on Him a big earthen pot (traditionally used in Kerala for the ripening of bananas). It was only by evening, after much pleading that Kurūramma relented and released the Omnipresent, Omnipotent, Omniscient Lord from His imprisonment!

The tales of these devotees are sweet, and the devotees of the Child of Guruvayur are endless in number. May the enchanting Child and His devotees prosper in their love for each other!

A NATIONAL LANGUAGE FOR INDIA

(Continued from page 489)

should not deter us from exercising our judgement in this all-important matter. What we want is a suitable national language, and Hindi, as I have tried to show, is the best one available. So let us choose that.

The solution of the language problem in India requires some little sacrifice. If instead of choosing that language which has the greatest claims, we fight for our respective mother-tongues—for which we have naturally a partiality—it will be hampering the national cause. For a united India a common medium of intercourse, a national language, is absolutely necessary, and for this let us

throw overboard our personal predilections and be guided by practical considerations of the highest national importance. The one thing needed now is to provide facilities in every High School for learning Hindi. Let us earnestly do that, and the result will be marvellous. The national language cannot be delayed any more. The day is not far distant when Hindi will occupy its rightful place among the languages in India. We shall no more have to depend on a foreign tongue to speak to our own brothers and sisters of other provinces. A little more effort, and Hindi as a national medium of expression will be an accomplished fact.

A Polyandrous Tribe : The Kinnauri

AMIYA BHAUMIK

India's many subcultures, including that of the clannish mountain people under discussion in this article, have developed as the result of thousands of years of struggle with the physical environment, explains the author who is a research scholar in the Department of Anthropology at Lucknow University.

Inhabitants of each geographic area necessarily seek their adjustment with their physical surroundings through their constant interaction with it in order to fulfil most of their needs. As conditions of physical environment vary from one region to another, a diversity in human effort and social and cultural forms are bound to occur. They attract the eye of the layman as well as the social scientist.

Famous for its splendrous scenic beauty in the Western Himalayas, Himachal Pradesh, in the extreme north, is one of the states of the Indian Union. It is bounded on its four sides by Kashmir, Tibet, Uttar Pradesh, and Haryana. Deep valleys, cascading mountain streams, thick forests of pine and deodar, sparkling lakes and green fields specially distinguish the state and make it a place of enchanting natural beauty. Towering snow-clad mountains rise to the vicinity of 22,000 feet all through and present sublime and spectacular scenery.

Himachal is divided into ten districts—Chamba, Mandi, Bilaspur, Mahasu, Sirmur, Kinnaur, Simla, Kangra, Kulu, and Lahaul and Spiti. The capital is Simla, at an altitude of 7,262 feet, the most attractive tourist spot and hill resort, but Kulu, Manali, and Dharmasala (home in exile of the Dalai Lama) are also much sought-after hill stations in the summer. Other months see the whole upland region frequently lashed by icy winds and covered with snow.

Himachal's history goes back very far,

even to the Vedic age, when the region was acclaimed. Its earliest tribal people were assimilated into the Aryan culture. These clans today—notably the Gaddis, Gujars, Kinners, Lahaulis, and Pangawalas, still follow Hindu traditions. Though each has its own dialect, the influence of Sanskrit is discernible in all of them. Some live in very remote and inaccessible areas. Road communication has been receiving priority, yet, during winter many places remain entirely cut off for weeks because of heavy snowfalls. Most of Himachal's indigenous folk are poor because of rocky soils and little industry. Generally they remain at the subsistence level.

Kinnaur is the north-eastern frontier district, the whole of which is secluded from other parts of the state and country. The district being made up entirely of rugged mountains is encircled by high hills and peaks. Its eastern border connects with the international border of western Tibet. This border is well-defined by water, parting the Zaskar Mountains. Southern boundary adjoins the districts of Uttarkashi, of Uttar Pradesh, and the next district of Himachal, Mahasu. On the west, Kinnaur touches Mahasu also, and the Kulu district. The northern boundary adjoins the Spiti sub-division of Lahaul and Spiti district. Covering an area of 6,520 square kilometres, there is a population of only about sixty thousand, but a large portion of the region is uninhabited due to the vast range of snowy mountains and inaccessible crags and forests. Besides, winter temperatures of -30° are common.

Kinnaur is intercepted by the river Satluj and its tributaries, namely, Spiti, Ropa, Taiti, Kashang, Mulgoon, Yula, Wanger, Shorang, and the Rupi. There are also the Tirang, the Gyanthing, the Baspa, the Duling and Saldang.

Prior to the merger of the former princely states, the area comprising Kinnaur was a *tahsil*, called Chini, of the erstwhile Bushahr State, under the charge of a *Tahsildar* or assistant collector. The present name of Kinnaur was adopted in 1960 when the region was made a district for the purpose of more convenient and better administration, 'Kinnaur' being derived from the name of the inhabitants, Kinners.

The princely Bushahr state had an interesting mythological history. In very ancient times, a good general of a raja (perhaps Dev Purna of Kamru) was envied by other courtiers. It is believed that he, therefore, went on a pilgrimage to the holy lake Manasarovar, and on returning from the lake he was followed down the mountain passes by a blue-water stream, the Shohneet of the Puranas, i.e., the present Satluj. After passing Shipki, in the domain of his ex-sovereign, Banasur established his own capital at Shohneetpur, named after the blue river. Shohneetpur is said to be the same as the present Sarhan. Banasur built and consolidated his kingdom and eventually reconciled with Dev Purna, who had remained without an heir. Later King Dev Purna offered his state, the Baspa Valley to Banasur when he was about to die. Thus the Baspa valley got added to the Shohneetpur and a new bigger state called Bushahr came into existence.

History of the Kinners

Inhabitants of the present district of Kinnaur are generally called Kinners or Kanauras.

Legends and mythology depict Kinners (Skt. *Kinnarās*) as a distinct race of semi-celestial beings living in 'mountains, sometimes described as 'horse-headed', also *Kim-puruṣās*. The *Purāṇas* describe *Kinnarās* as heavenly musicians or choristers. Heinrich, in his book *Myths and Legends*, pointed out that such creatures were supposed to inhabit a semi-celestial region high in the Himalaya, where saints of earth who attain perfection consort with these supernatural beings. Satyaketu Vidyalkar mentions that the area of mountains of the Satluj river where the erstwhile Bushahr and other states near the Simla Hills existed was anciently known as Kinnerdesh. The Kinnerdesh was situated between the mountains of the Satluj and the Yamuna. Inhabitants of the Kinnerdesh were called Kinners.

Kinnaur culture is full of folk songs and tales which go back to the *Mahābhārata* period. Kinnaur seems to be the region where the Pandavas spent the best part of their exile. Kinners, however, are mentioned in many of the Hindu religious books. The great poet Kalidasa remembers them in his famous book *Kumārsambhava*.

Therefore it is easy to be convinced that there did exist an ancient race of Kinners and that race inhabited the area now comprising our district, as well as adjacent areas of the Himalayas.

Social Life

Kinners are a closely structured group. The family is the smallest unit of social organization, but in Kinnaur it assumes a tripartite constitution, viz. nuclear, extended and polyandrous. Nuclear families are very few, consisting of two parents and their unmarried children, or husband and wife without children. But there are extended families, comprising members of several generations, both vertically and horizontally.

and polyandrous families that include wife and more than one husband and their unmarried children. Families of multiple wives (*polygynous*) are not found. •

Society in Kinnaur is patrilineal with patrilocal residence. Both succession and inheritance of property occur in the male line. Each household is controlled by a strong patriarch. In a polyandrous family when one of the husbands dies, the property belonging to him is inherited by the surviving co-husbands. After the death of all husbands, the sons begotten by them inherit the patrimony in equal shares. Practically, as long as brother(s) of a deceased husband live, the death of that person is recorded in the revenue papers as 'issueless' and the property is mutated in favour of his surviving brother(s).

Children born unsanctioned (extramaritally) to a widow or to an uncommitted woman, called *poltu*, male, or *poltee*, female, have no claim to property by way of inheritance. Children of a legally married woman have the social sanction to get the whole property of the deceased father(s) through inheritance. The *poltu*, as a rule, (if accommodated by other members of the family) become servants to the rest of the household. They are supported by the family or sometimes are given a small portion of land and a small sum of money by the head of the family according to his means and discretion. Such an illegitimate child has no right to property.

There are two sets of rules in connection with the division of property in a polyandrous family. These are *jathong* and *kanchong*. *Jathong* refers to the right of the eldest and *kanchong* to the youngest of the family. Before the partition of property takes place the good land is given to the eldest brother and the ancestral house to the youngest. After distributing the above, the rest of the

property is then divided in equal shares. The ideology behind such practice is that the youngest son being just a starter or not an earning hand, should be given a new home for himself and that the eldest son should get the best land, in recognition of his seniority and experience in the matter of cultivation.

Wajib-ul-araz is a custom through which powers are restricted to the members of the joint family, either to alienate or otherwise transfer any property against the interests of reversioners.

Marriage

Generally, Kinners prefer polyandry, though monogamous marriages are also found. It is due to outside influences. Polyandry keeps the family close-knit and prevents both over-population and fragmentation of the already small agricultural holdings. It also provides sufficient able-hands to eke out a precarious living from the inhospitable soil, and allows full benefit of scarce resources by way of pooling them together. Moreover, formerly polyandry was directly encouraged by the imposing of penalties on the partitioner. Government banned the division of moveable and immoveable property among the brothers. Violators had to pay heavy penalties.

In the polyandrous marriage system, several brothers are shared by one wife. In some cases wife's sister is also brought as a second wife, if the former is barren. Sometimes also a younger brother can marry another girl because of the common wife's being older. In that case, if the new wife does not agree to accept other brothers as her husbands, then the division of property is inevitable.

All the husbands are reckoned as fathers of each child. The eldest brother is called *teg-hoba* (elder father) and the others *gato-*

hoha (younger father). Practically, the eldest brother is regarded as the father of all the children begotten from the wife.

During marriage ceremonies all brothers who are to marry a girl have to observe a special custom. Each is required to wear a turban, locally called *pag likshimu*, in order to have the status of bridegroom.

The most adverse effect of the polyandrous arrangement is that a number of the female population is left unmarried. They often take refuge in the monastic convents, becoming nuns.

Role of Women

In polyandry woman has an important role. This mode of marriage is an economic necessity for the Kinners, so long brothers have to live in a joint family and have to depend on local scanty resources for their subsistence. The unity of the family depends upon the ingenuity of the lady of the house who looks after all her husbands with equal favour, without giving any cause for offence to anyone.

Women are very industrious and play a vital role in the economic life. Besides the usual daily household cares, they are often seen afield, helping in various agricultural operations, save ploughing, which is always done by men. The women sow the seed, weed, irrigate and harvest the crops, make hay, collect firewood and pasture the livestock, and carry loads. Wool carding is also part of their job. Apart from these, they

help in any other type of work. Despite this solid contribution, they are to a great extent dependent on the men in all stages and situations of life, for shelter, food, and clothing. Except for articles given by her parents at the time of marriage, and to which she is customarily entitled, a woman (excepting a widow) has no right by way of inheritance, and otherwise to any property, either in her husbands' or in her parents' house. Even wages earned occasionally, by some women, are generally not retained or spent privately by them, but are handed over to the parents, in the case of unmarried girls, or to their husbands, by the married.

Summing up the role of the women, Dr. Van Der Sleen mentioned that the women do everything, including the heaviest jobs, and the only job to which the men attend to regularly is ploughing, which really is little more than addressing the oxen by means of a heavy cudgel. He says that women provide the best and the cheapest available labour in the area, and to procure it one may even [wish?] to marry four or five wives. Till such time as education among the women spreads, their existing condition is not likely to improve appreciably.*

* Fortunately, after independence, Himachal Pradesh has been taking rapid strides in the field of education and economic development. Tourism and road construction have substantially contributed to increasing prosperity in the state. Growing consciousness of changes taking place in the country has had an impact on the out-dated social customs.

There is no chance for the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved. It is not possible for a bird to fly on only one wing.

—Swami Vivekananda

Hindu Eschatology and Cosmogony

SYAMADAS BANERJEE

The author discusses some of the aspects of cosmogony outlined in India's ancient Sankhya Philosophy. He is a former Director of Geological Survey of India. At present he is an honorary worker in our Ramakrishna Mission Centre at Narainpur (M.P.).

Eschatology is the branch of theology concerned with death, judgement, heaven and hell. For millennia, man's inquisitiveness has centred in such questions as what happens when a man dies, what is his origin and goal, what is his relationship with the phenomenal universe, and how the universe has come into existence.

The Hindu concept of cosmogony and cosmic evolution is mainly based on Kapila's Sāṅkhya Philosophy of the twenty-five principles. In addition, another important authority is Patañjali, but his system is also based upon the Sāṅkhya, the points of difference being very few. Patañjali admits a Personal God in the form of a first teacher, while the Sāṅkhyas admit of God as a nearly perfected being, temporarily in charge of a cycle of creation. Secondly, the Yogis hold the mind to be equally all-pervading with the soul, or *Puruṣa*, and the Sāṅkhyas do not.¹

Another important school, Advaita, believes in one Existence, the Absolute, or Brahman, and the universe as an apparent manifestation or *māyā*, having no real existence. To them, the soul does not go anywhere after its apparent death, because omnipresent is the true Self of man. Similarly, the creation and evolution are also apparent, and on removal of cosmic ignorance, or

māyā, nothing remains but One—the True, the Absolute.²

The First Principle is the undifferentiated *Puruṣa-Prakṛti*, the Prime Cause (*Mahā-kāraṇa*)—source and repository of all creation, beyond time, space and causation. It is the *Paramātmā* of the Yogis, and *Sat-cit-ānanda* (Existence-Knowledge-Bliss), or Brahman, of the Advaitists. The *Brāhman-Śakti*, or the Power of Brahman, is the *Prakṛti*, inseparable from Brahman, and wherefrom flows the creative energy, wherein lie in equilibrium the three *guṇas*—*sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*, the psychic and physical material cause of the universe. The undifferentiated Brahman is beyond the reach of human mind and speech to describe, and can only be realized in *Turīya*, the state of cosmic consciousness.

The cycle of creation (*kalpa*) starts with a process of differentiation—a vibration, or stir, the emerging of the sound OM (AUM), or *Nāda-brahman*, the Pure Consciousness becoming conscious of Itself. Man's thinking power, or knowledge, could at best reach up to this point. The 'big bang' theory of the modern scientists for the creation of the universe may be something analogous. Even in the *Bible* we find 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.' (St. John). The similar statement we have in our Veda:

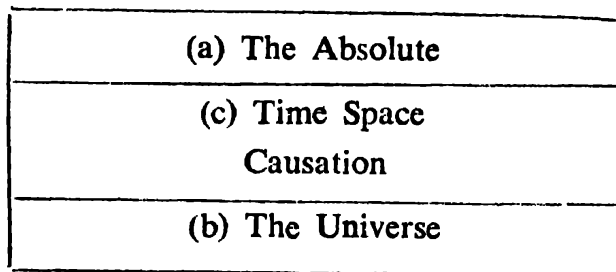
1. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989) Vol. I, p. 123.

2. Swami Vivekananda, *Jnana Yoga* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1980) pp. 324-325.

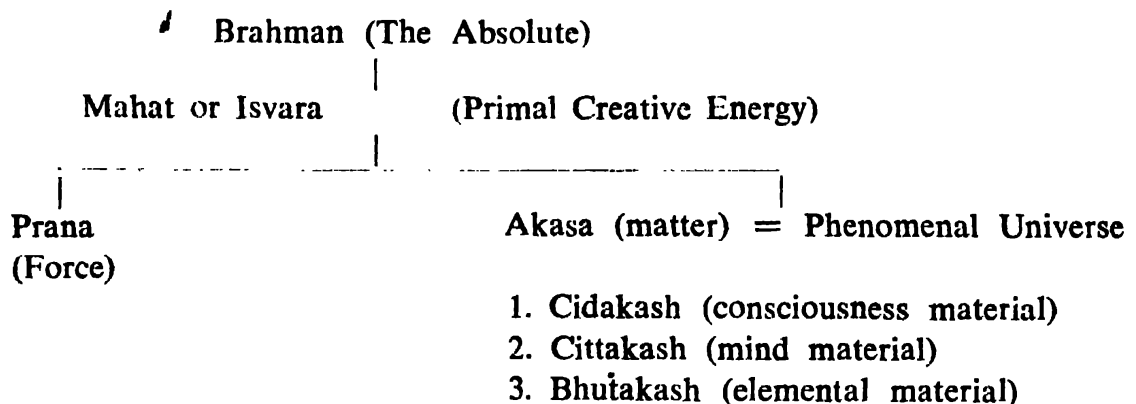
“*Vagvai paramam brahma*—Word indeed is God.”³

Differentiation and evolution in Nature are pointed out in modern science. For example, the formation of all rocks from a primal melted material termed *magma* by the geologists, and the explanation of evolution of all molecules—simple hydrogen to heavier complex and organic substances—from the primal cosmic energy, given by the famous Einsteinian equation $E = mc^2$.

Swami Vivekananda described evolution as subjective and explained it using the simple diagram⁴:



wherein the absolute Pure Consciousness becomes the universe through the medium of time, space, and the law of causation. He also gave the differentiation in the following manner:



The second Principle according to the above is *Mahat*, or *Isvara*, the Universal Mind. It is the first product of cosmic evolution after the start of creation caused by the play of the three *gunas*. The Cosmic Intelligence of the *Puruṣa* is transmitted, and it acts as the repository of all creative impressions (memory) like a giant computer. Herein, it is said, the three aspects of *Nāda-brahman* (OM), express as *Brahmā*, *Viṣṇu* and *Siva*, the Hindu Trinity, the Gods of creation, sustenance, and dissolution. The Cosmic Intelligence evolves through *Prakṛti*, embodying the three *gunas*: *sattva*, *rajas* and *taṃas*. (A beautiful allegory of the creation of the world is given in the *Devī Māhātmyam*.)⁵

From the *Mahat* or *Isvara* are produced the individual souls or *jīvātmās*. The internal psyche of the individual embodied soul has three faculties: *manas*, *buddhi*, and *ahankāra*. *Manas* or mindstuff records sense-impressions which yield knowledge and lead to action by the power of will. The *buddhi* is the discriminating faculty classifying the mind impressions and making possible reaction; and the *ahankāra* is the ego-sense, claiming impressions as individual, and misapprehending the Soul as the ego.

3. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. III, pp. 57-58.

4. *Jnana Yoga*, pp. 108-9.

5. *Letters of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1981) p. 282.

This is the subtle *manomayakośa*, or mind sheath, one of the veils of *māyā* covering the Pure *Ātman* or Soul.

The next further evolution is that of the mind. The cosmic Principles, viz. the five subtle elements (*ākāśa*, *vāyu*, *tej*, *āpa*, *kṣiti* (space, air, colour, water and earth, respectively); the five sense organs (ears, skin, eyes, tongue, nose); and the five organs of action (vocal organ, hands, feet, and the organs of generation and evacuation), and the five vital life forces (*prāṇas*) all evolve from it. These, along with mind, intellect, and ego or *ahaṅkāra*, with *Puruṣa* and *Prakṛti*, compose the twenty-five Principles of Sāṅkhya. (known as *cosmic*, because they are found universally throughout nature). The *jīvātma*, thus evolved, with its subtle coverings and gross physical coverings is the embodied being. Due to all these evolutes, the Soul is also envisioned as dwelling within five *kośas* (sheaths). These are evolved as above, the sheath of the gross physical elements (*annamayakośa*), the sheath of mind (*manomayakośa*), the sheath of intellect (*vijñānamayakośa*), the sheath of the vital life-forces (*prāṇamayakośa*), and the thin sheath of cosmic *māyā*, the sheath of bliss (*ānandamayakośa*).

All gross evolutes have within them, due to the series of evolutionary steps described, the subtle evolutes, (just like a tree having its potential form present within its seed), and after the end of the cycle (*kalpa*), they revert back into their most subtle original unmanifested state. There they remain at rest or dormant. The souls proceed through this *śrī cakra* (cycle of evolution-involution) adopting various bodies life after life impelled by the inevitable universal law of karma.⁶

Thus the universe pulsates between expansion and contraction. Evidence of the

expanding universe is thus seen in the discovery of the 'red shift' or Doppler's Effect. A stage will come thereafter when an opposite movement (involution) will lead the whole creation back to the unmanifested subtle state from whence it came. When the universe is finally thus dissolved at the end of a *kalpa*, it is said to rest in *yoga-nidrā*, or yoga sleep.

The spiritual evolution of a *jīva* is not exactly that of Darwin's *Origin of the Species*. It is a succession of events in the time-space-causation framework, involving apparently both evolution and involution, somewhat akin to the formation of a cocoon, wherein an insect or spider encloses itself within its own material and then comes out of it to find its freedom. In fact, freedom is the very nature of all *jīvas*. It is said that even an electron, strongly bound in the inner shell of an atom, tries to escape through a process known as 'electron tunnelling'. Nearly a hundred years ago Swami Vivekananda⁷ echoed the same truth that everything in this universe, right from an atom to all things sentient and insentient, are constantly struggling to escape to freedom.

Consciousness and life are also functions of the universe, the omniscience of which is indicated by the successful modern experiments on sub-atomic supraluminal consciousness transmission,⁸ showing the underlying unity behind the universe. The unit conception is also carried by the scientific fact that the sum total of energy of the universe (all mass converted) is constant. The cosmochemical abundance in the universe is also constant, according to geochemistry.

Life in the universe is ubiquitous. Bacteria are found inside meteorites coming from

7. Swami Vivekananda, *Karma Yoga* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1984) pp. 104-5.

8. *Prabuddha Bharata* editorial. Vol. 95, May 1989; pp. 228-235.

6. *Jnana Yoga*, p. 302.

space, and organic molecules in the interstellar dust. It is also very astounding that the microcosm and the macrocosm, the two extremes in nature, look so alike. The structure of an atom is just like a miniature universe; ontogeny repeats phylogeny (bio-science); and geological microstructures simulate the mega-structure.⁹ Even before these scientific discoveries were made, Vivekananda remarked that the microcosm and the macrocosm are built on the same plan, just as the individual soul encased in the living body and the Universal Soul in the Living *Prakṛti*—the objective universe.¹⁰ No wonder that Sri Ramakrishna so often used to say that whatever is in our body is also present in the universe—(*Jā āche bhāṇḍe tāi āche brahmāṇḍe*.)

Now, let us examine the Hindu eschatology. Swami Vivekananda gave a good account of it in his letter of 13 Feb. 1896 to Mr. E. T. Sturdy.

When a man dies his gross body gets destroyed along with the elements that were the cause of the body. The soul in a subtle body escapes the dead body in a more fine and rapidly vibrating condition; therefore it is invisible to us. The subtle body takes away with it the subtle elements, the subtle senses, organs and *manas*, *buddhi* and *ahamkāra*.

The *manas*, *buddhi* and *ahamkāra* together form the character of the departed individual, depending on the sum total resultant impressions in his previous births. This is called the body formed by *samskāras*. What it is, is the outcome of all the experiences that impressed the mind-stuff in the past—past deeds, thoughts, etc., good and

bad. The *law of karma* thus effects the formation and shape of the subtle body, and the future characteristics of the physical body in births to come. The ingrained *samskāras* or impressions might be reflected by the modern discovery of RNA/DNA molecules in the genes of individuals, determining largely their character pattern.

Depending on this *samskāra* phenomenon, the dualistic school has developed a three-fold eschatology of possibilities for the individual soul when it leaves this world, namely: (1) heavens, (2) different spheres or lokas, and (3) ghosts and animal bodies

Righteous people go to different heavens, but on the exhaustion of their *punyās* or the fruits of their good deeds, again they return to the earth assuming different bodies in different social environments. It is said that most of the souls strongly bound by *karma* (past actions) are reborn within a short period of their passing away.

The rebirth process has been described in the *Gītā* as the soul entering the earth through rain, and then getting fixed in crops grown on it, then passing into bodies after they have eaten the grains, and through blood and semen, forming new bodies. The transmigration of soul happens automatically in selectively compatible bodies, having energy in proportion to their holding capacity.

The wicked people become ghosts and remain somewhere in between heaven and earth. They mostly become animals on rebirth, unless emancipated by the grace of the Lord or a saint.

People having mixed *karmas* and having propitiated their ancestors go to *pitṛloka* or *suryaloka*; others to *chandraloka* and thence to *vyotirloka*, depending on their good deeds

9. Banerjee, S. "Bhu-vidya" J. Geol. Inst. 45 (Calcutta: Presidency College, 1988) p. 14.

10. Swami Vivekananda, *Science & Philosophy of Religion* (Calcutta: Udbodhan Office, 1983) pp. 1-8.

Reflections on the Meaning of Sri Ramakrishna for Women

SRI SARADA DEVI, THE HOLY MOTHER

ANN MYREN

Concluding her series of articles befittingly with Sri Sarada Devi the author nicely explains how Holy Mother's luminous, totally unselfish life, offers an ideal for modern women in every part of the world. Ann Myren, for decades has been serving in the cause of Vedanta in America. Many of her learned articles have appeared in this Journal.

At last we come to Sri Sarada Devi, the woman in Sri Ramakrishna's life who was the most important and significant woman of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Her significance reaches beyond India, touching all womankind and, consequently, all humanity. It is she who teaches us how to live spiritually amidst the cares and tumult of the world, to work, raise families, be mothers, and care for each other. Sri Sarada Devi's spiritual responses to life's problems, common and uncommon, show us that she is an archetypic figure; that is, a universal model for women in the new age initiated by the advent of Sri Ramakrishna.

It seems quite odd that this archetypic woman would be born in a poor village in India and live her life out in humble, and often straitened circumstances. One might expect a woman of such extraordinary capacity to have flashed across the sky like a blazing meteor for all to see. But instead, in the subdued shadows of village India as well as in the traditional confines of a Calcutta home, she lived, worked, cared for her family, instructed her devotees and practised her religion. For that matter, she practised her religion by living, working, caring, and loving.

There is about archetypic figures a universality. They come from different times and cultures, but what they express always transcends time and culture. That is why they are considered archetypic. To understand the story of Sri Sarada Devi's life, we must explore two different levels: first, the existential experience which shaped her and to which she responded, that is, her experience within her culture. And second, we must go beyond her culture and consider her universality as archetypic.

Let us begin at the beginning of this drama. Sarada was born in 1853 in the village of Jayrambati in West Bengal. Here in this village of about 100 or so mud houses, Sarada's family, the Mukherji's, had lived for many generations. This is a lovely area, very peaceful even today, with rich farm lands, sturdy village houses, tanks, and the Arnador river flowing nearby. During the early years of Sarada's life her family was very poor, as was the village, but later on the village began to prosper. Sarada's family and relatives were one of the two Brahmin families in the village.

From the time Sarada was a very small child she worked helping her mother, gathering feed for the cows, helping to raise her brothers, and doing other useful

things. Sarada was the first child of her parents ; she had one sister and five brothers. Her sister died at an early age. As the eldest, Sarada was a very important worker in the family. For her karma yoga began at a very tender age and lasted until her death. This was not unusual in a village in India, but Sarada's attitude was unusual. She seemed to be a natural 'karma yogini', always willing, always helpful. But it was not all work. She played with other children, worshipping the gods and goddesses, and playing house. Sarada often settled the quarrels of her playmates. The girl was mother to the woman. Sarada never lost her sense of fun. The joy and happiness of her childhood continued throughout her life. And about work, when she grew up, she prayed to the Lord that she would always have work to do as long as she lived.

Is it not rather romantic in this age of cities and machines to look back to a simpler time and place for values that will enrich and strengthen our lives—to seek the universal in a nineteenth century Bengali village ? Of course it is. But what we need in this troubled age is a way of life, charged with feeling and emotion, that will carry us to our innate nobility which is, in fact, our divinity. If we can find a universal model, whether in village or city, then we too can shape our lives and claim our birthright, our divinity.

This looking back' does raise a serious question. Are we being strictly honest if, when we look back, we pick and choose only what suits our cultural values ? For example, Sarada was married when she was a little over five years old. And now, of course, the trend in modern societies is to marry much later, allowing children to grow up before such a serious commitment is made. Not only has the age at which men and women marry changed, but in many societies there is often no prohibition against

living together without marriage vows. Clearly, we must distinguish in Sarada's life between those attitudes and actions which were appropriate only to her time and place and those which transcend a particular time and place.

Sarada herself was taught to make necessary distinctions in her actions when she learned from Sri Ramakrishna that one should behave according to the necessity of time, the necessity of person and the necessity of situation. Sri Ramakrishna himself practised these rules of behaviour when he married Sarada. Although at this period in his life he was deeply immersed in spiritual practice, the Master married at the request of his mother, following the social conventions of the times. He himself selected his own bride after his family had failed to find an acceptable one. He later instructed Sarada to say that she had been married at the age of five-and-a-half, making it clear that she too had acted according to the accepted conventions. There is probably another good reason he told Sarada to say that she had been married at that age. It made clear that she was his only choice, and although he would have to wait many years for her to come to him, she *was* his choice. If this is true, then we can begin to see the uniqueness of Sarada. To speculate, it may have been that the Master knew already, as divine incarnations do know, that his wife would share his mission. At a later time at Cossipore when the Master was ill, there was an important conversation between them. Sarada said to the Master after he had looked at her for a long time, apparently wanting to say something, 'Why don't you speak out what you wish to ?' He answered, 'Well, my dear, won't you do anything ? Should this (pointing to his own body) do everything single-handed ?' Sarada answered, 'I am a woman. What can I do ?' Then the Master said, No, no, you'll have to do

a lot.¹ This raises the question of Sarada's origins. Was she an ordinary woman whom the Master formed according to his need, to share his mission, or was she an extraordinary woman, who was divinity herself, and who had a special mission also? Judging from the evidence, it seems to be the latter.

Sarada in her eventful village life was always busy. Her brother Kali said in later life, 'Our sister is Lakshmi incarnate. She spared no pains to keep us alive. Husking paddy, spinning sacred thread, supplying the cattle with fodder, cooking,—in short, most of the household work was done single-handed by our sister.'² But apparently she did not always work alone. She later said in reference to her early days, 'As a girl I saw that another girl of my age always accompanied me, helped me in my work, frolicked with me; but she disappeared at the approach of other people. This continued till I was ten or eleven years old.'³ A similar thing happened to her when visiting the Master at Kamarpukur when she was thirteen or fourteen in 1867. She wanted to go to the tank for a bath, but she felt shy as she was a married woman and unaccompanied. Then she saw eight girls come toward her. When she stepped on to the road, four girls came and walked in front of her and four in back of her. They all went to the tank, had their dip, and then returned in the same way. This happened everyday when she went to bathe during her stay in Kamarpukur.⁴

It is impossible to know Sarada's state of consciousness at any time in her life, inclu-

ding her childhood. But these two incidents, reliably reported by Sarada Devi herself, give us just a faint insight into her perceptions. Now we must ask ourselves, what was her persistent state of consciousness? We have no way of knowing other than what she reported herself. We know, once again from her own words, that after she stayed with the Master in his village in 1867 and received instruction from him, she felt as if a pitcher of bliss had been installed in her heart. Imagine that joy!

When Sarada made this visit to Kamarpukur in 1867, she saw the Master for the first time since she was seven. Now she was fourteen and a young woman. The Master had not visited his village home in the interim. During his stay in Kamarpukur a situation arose which could have caused much conflict and bad feelings on the part of Sarada. The Master had brought the Bhairavi Brahmani with him on this visit. She wanted to protect the Master from anything which would mar or interrupt his spiritual sadhana. She had, for example, objected to his being initiated by Tota Puri into nondualism. But neither the Master nor Tota Puri paid her any heed. When Sri Ramakrishna was initiated by Tota Puri, Tota Puri had said, regarding the Master's marriage, 'What does it matter? He only may be regarded as really established in Brahman whose renunciation, detachment, discrimination and knowledge remain intact in all respects in spite of his wife being with him.' Tota Puri went on to say that only when a person attains to Brahman can he look equally on both men and women.⁵ Undoubtedly, it is because of this 'equal vision' that the Master is an *ideal* teacher for women. The Bhairavi, however, did not have Tota Puri's view of the Master and, consequently, believed that the Master's

1. Swami Gambhirananda, *Holy Mother Shri Sarada Devi* (Mylapore, Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1969), p. 120.

2. Ibid., p. 24.

3. Ibid., p. 22.

4. Ibid., pp. 29-30.

5. Ibid., p. 266.

continence would be compromised if he mixed freely with his wife. Apparently the Bhairavi was not altogether courteous to Sarada. However, Sarada treated her with the respect due a mother-in-law and did not 'protest against any of her words or actions.'⁶ Finally, the Bhairavi violated a village social custom, creating a heated conflict with Hriday, the Master's nephew. When the Bhairavi saw that she was in the wrong, she went off to Kasi.

The Master spent seven months at Kamar-pukur instructing Sri Sarada in all matters: care and management of the household, social behaviour and spiritual practices. We do not know the exact spiritual practices the Master taught Sarada and what these practices brought about. But from the knowledge of her life that we have, let us speculate on her state of mind. What kind of a person could receive a 'pitcher of bliss' in the heart? Only a person who had transcended the limitations of human nature. How do we know that this condition had occurred in Sarada's life? By her actions. For example, when she lived in her village, she was not a gadabout. She was close to only one devotee and did not go about gossiping with other women. She became well-versed in the religious lore of her land. She worked in the fields, cut grain, raised her brothers, was absolutely unselfish, was the embodiment of endurance and patience. This was a period of poverty and extreme hardship for her family. Nevertheless, Sarada was always joyful, calm, happy and full of love and service to others. All of Sarada's actions and virtues are so uncomplicated, so down to earth. How can we say that these things are the mark of a high spiritual condition? We know from our own lives that the constant manifestation of such simple virtues is nearly impossible. Only the purest

of the pure, someone who is established in her innate perfection, can conduct herself the way Sarada did.

What she had received from her husband went deep into her heart, and she continually dwelt on him. That she did this is another indication of her very high state of consciousness. Actually, it sounds like a very ordinary and human approach to life. After all the Master was a man, a human being, and her husband, and Sarada a woman, his wife; so was not the constant dwelling on him simply a human thing to do? No. The Master lived entirely in God and dwelling on him was a kind of meditation. Sarada's love had gone beyond the limitations of human nature, human appetites and human passions, bringing about a higher state of consciousness, a sense of holiness. Had she not been so pure, could she ever have allowed the Master to lead a celibate life, and done so herself? This period was an extraordinary period in her life, an intense and thorough preparation for the future.

In 1872, when Sarada was eighteen, news drifted back from Dakshineswar to Jayram-bati which seemed to indicate that Sarada was married to a mad man. What distress she must have felt! But on the other hand, with her own resources, her steadiness and her inner knowledge of the Master, she must have doubted the truth of the rumours about his condition. But the position of a young married woman at that time made it impossible for Sarada to ask anyone directly about the condition of her husband. However, Sarada's father felt his daughter's anxiety and asked her if she wanted to visit her husband at Dakshineswar.

At this time a party of women from Sarada's village were going on foot to Calcutta about sixty miles distant. They agreed that Sarada and her father could accompany

6. Ibid., p. 267.

them as far as Dakshineswar which was a few miles north of Calcutta. On the way Sarada was overcome by a high fever and stayed overnight in a small wayside inn. Sarada's fever left her after a rather strange encounter with a Kali-like woman who entered her room and told her that she was from Dakshineswar and was also Sarada's sister. This dark woman stroked Sarada's body, the fever subsided, and Sarada was ready in the morning to walk on to where the Master lived. However, a palanquin was found, and further on when they arrived at the Ganga, they took a country boat for the last leg of the journey.⁷ All this took place in March of 1872, a year of exceptional significance. For women 1872 is a watershed in their history as well as the history of the world. But more about that later. First, let us see how Sri Ramakrishna received Sarada Devi and what kind of a life she led living in the holy precincts of the Kali temple which had been dedicated by the prescient Rani Rasmani.

Here something must be said about the Master's meaning for women. Because Sri Ramakrishna was a man, he could live and act in much freer ways than a woman in the very traditional Bengali culture. He could be mad with divine love; he could lose himself in samadhi for a month; he could let his cloth drop off while in ecstasy. Women could not do these things in public. Judging from historical records, there were accomplished holy women in India during this period, but the society was so restrictive that little is known about the details of their lives. In contrast to the history of holy women, we have a tremendous amount of knowledge about Sri Ramakrishna. And we have it because he was a male, free to act, and because men wrote his history. How-

ever, it must be pointed out that we have much of the history of Sarada Devi because she was judged to be so great by later generations of monks.

Now, in this drama of Sri Ramakrishna and Sri Sarada Devi we will see how the Master has deep meaning for women as a holy, wise man, a teacher whose purpose was to raise women, actually to expand their horizons and endow them with God-knowledge and Self-knowledge. He not only shared this mission with Sarada Devi, but he gave her power to carry out the long remainder of his mission after his death.

When Sarada came to Dakshineswar she was very well received by her husband. He immediately saw to her comfort; she moved into his room, the one which is referred to as Sri Ramakrishna's room, and then he began her training.⁸ An accomplished young woman of eighteen, she had already learned many things. But she still had more to learn under the guidance of the Master. We have seen what his role as a teacher of women was in previous articles, but perhaps a few inferences can be made which indicate to us the mood, content, and method of his teaching for Sarada. As to the mood or attitude the Master took when teaching Sarada, it must be remembered that he was absolutely straightforward. He could surrender everything to the Divine Mother but truth. As a result there was no hemming and hawing, no artifice; he was perfectly without guile. On the other hand, he was particularly kind to women. He cared for them, respected their sensitivity, and cultivated that feminine capacity himself.

The second characteristic of the Master's teaching was his meticulousness. No detail escaped his eye, no carelessness went unno-

7. Swami Nikhilananda, *Holy Mother* (New York: Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center, 1962), pp. 35-6.

8. Pravrajika Atmaprana, *Sri Ramakrishna's Dakshineswar* (New Delhi: Ramakrishna Sarada Mission, 1986), p. 22.

ticed, every action was to be perfect. We know this from his teaching of others. For example, when he sent someone to the market, he cautioned him to pay only a fair price and to carefully select the purchase. He told the persons who took care of him always to put an article in its proper place so it could be easily found. He reminded those he was with to look around themselves before leaving a place so that nothing was left behind. The Master expertly handled the details of his life and expected the same of everyone else.

With regard to his mood, he was almost always joyful, whether giving spiritual instruction or teaching about the ordinary tasks of life. Perhaps the only times he was sad was when his close relatives or devotees died. For three days he grieved for his nephew, Akshay. But those days were not the rule. Generally he was merry, joyful, happy, full of mirth and he talked about God, Truth, Reality, and this mood carried right into life's routine tasks. This does not mean that he was never serious nor that he never corrected anyone; to teach is to correct.

Sri Ramakrishna, the master teacher, taught by example, direct statement, metaphor, and parable. For example, when he told Sarada how to behave according to the necessity of time, of person and of situation, he was teaching her directly by stating a traditional Bengali practice. But he also taught the same thing by his own example. He was careful about his dress when he visited important people but more casual when among the devotees. He teased and joked, but he also exemplified courtesy, particularly in his relationship with his wife. One time when she entered the room, he mistakenly thought she was a servant and spoke to her using the familiar form which in Bengali is reserved for servants and children. He was quite taken aback when he realized his mistake and he apologized.

The Master's instruction was rich in metaphor. Once he told the life of Sri Krishna to Sarada and his niece, Lakshmi. Then using the metaphor of the cow chewing her cud, he told Lakshmi that they, Sarada and she, should discuss at night what they had heard from him, as the cattle who eat all day and chew their cud at night.⁹ Furthermore, the Master was an artist. As a boy he drew, made images of the gods and as a young man mended a holy image perfectly. So when he taught Sarada about yoga he actually drew a picture of the six *chakras* for her.¹⁰ Sri Ramakrishna's teaching skill was such that all teachers could take lessons from him.

For Sarada there were two basic kinds of knowledge that the Master gave her: that which was concerned with her work and that which was spiritual. He taught her such things as what preparations to make for travelling, arranging household objects, care of the oil lamp, and how to dress vegetables and prepare betel leaves.¹¹ She learned how to manage a very large household, to cook for many people, to prepare a great variety of dishes, to get the correct amounts of provisions, in general all of the necessary skills for the expert management of a household of many persons. One might ask, why bring all of this up, it is just what women of that era did. That is true, but Sarada expressed her divine mission through the medium of running a household. So humble, and so great.

Sarada worked her whole life managing a household. Historically, work has always been defined as something that is done by men outside the house. Men go to the fields, factories, places of business, and there they work while women run the household,

9. Gambhirananda, *Shri Sarada Devi*, p. 106.

10. Ibid.

11. Nikhilananda, *Holy Mother*, p. 39.

which is not defined as work. And in most of the world women also work in the fields or outside the house. This misconception about the role of work in a woman's life has been one of the great contributing factors to drawing women out into the world of men's work. Only in the male domain do women find that their work is given recognition and value. Have the value, dignity and indispensability of woman's work ever been recognized by the power-holders? Never! We even have an expression in English showing the demeaned status of household work—'women's work'. 'Women's work' is generally uttered with contempt and is often used when men refuse to do certain tasks associated with children and the household. But, is there anymore important work than to be the carriers of the culture to the young? Women are the culture-bearers and when this valued function of the female part of the population begins to wane, the culture is in trouble. Someone must teach the children!

Sarada's whole life was spent in managing a household. And it just may be that this aspect of her life bears an important message for both women and men. For women the message is that this work can be a path to God-realization and that raising a family has dignity and meaning. For men the message is that taking care of the house, bearing children, looking to the human needs of the family is a noble work. Every work has value and dignity according to the philosophy of Vedanta.

The Master also schooled Sarada in the arts of human relations. Always following the principle of acting according to time, place and circumstance, he taught her to have consideration for the feelings of others, to be tactful, to be nice to her neighbours, and if anyone became ill, to inquire about the person's health from time

to time.¹² Sarada developed a growing concern for other people which was one effect of the Master's teachings. One time the Master came at three in the morning to wake up Sarada and Lakshmi. He wanted them to get up and meditate, so he playfully poured water under the door. Sarada was quite willing to get up, but asked, in defence of the others in the room, why he disturbed their sleep.

To sum up Sarada's life, it was one of extreme endurance and incessant activity. The Master was a careful and thorough teacher when it came to everyday activities. However, as a spiritual teacher he was incomparable because of his far-reaching and perfected knowledge of spiritual states and Divine Being.

As mentioned before, the year 1872 in which Sarada arrived in Dakshineswar is significant. In this year three important events took place: Sri Ramakrishna finished his spiritual practices; he began his period of instruction by teaching Sarada in a very comprehensive way; and, most significantly, he worshipped Sarada Devi as *Sodāṣī*, the Divine Mother in her form of a virgin of sixteen.

Sarada, his first pupil and a star, came to him wellprepared. She had already learned the myths, heard devotional songs, and probably sang them herself, and had seen many religious dramas about the gods and goddesses during her village life.¹³ She had been raised in a very orthodox family by her father who was a devout follower of Rama, and earned his income by being a priest, and a mother who said that her household was for God and His devotees.¹⁴ Of course, this kind of religious culture was common in Bengal at that time, and coming to

12. Ibid.

13. Gambhirananda, *Shri Sarada Devi*, p. 32.

14. Ibid., p. 16.

Dakshineswar did not mean that she was in any way to live in a foreign atmosphere. But to find a husband, almost constantly in high spiritual states, who needed her help to come down from these states, must have been at least a little surprising to her. Her role in assisting the Master made her a helper to her husband as well as his student in the subject of spiritual attainment. During her first two visits to Dakshineswar, she had to learn to recognize the moods of his ecstasies so that she could say the correct mantra and bring him back to a normal condition. She witnessed diverse spiritual states representing many different spiritual levels. From this experience she learned how to recognize spiritual states and how to judge the level of spiritual development of a person. What a school the Master provided for Sarada! Naturally, Sri Ramakrishna also initiated Sarada.

On one of her early visits to Kamarpukur, before she ever visited Dakshineswar, Sarada and along with Lakshmi had been initiated by Purnananda, a sannyasin. Purnananda gave both of them the *Shakti* mantra. Later the Master reinitiated them. He wrote something on Lakshmi's tongue and gave her the Radhakrishna mantra which was the 'ture' mantra for her. He also wrote something on Sarada's tongue,¹⁵ but we do not know what mantra he gave her, although it is believed that her *Ishta* was Jagaddhātṛī.

The worship of Sarada as *Soḍaṣī* was the culminating event of the Master's spiritual practices. *Soḍaṣī* was known to the Master in a special way. During his sadhana he had had a vision of her. None of his previous visions of the Mother in her various forms could compare in beauty to *Soḍaṣī*, who is always worshipped as a girl of sixteen, a virgin, whose special characteristic is radiant light. In the Master's vision he saw 'the

beauty of the person of *Soḍaṣī* which melted, spreading all around and illumining the quarters.'¹⁶

The worship of *Soḍaṣī* took place in the Master's room where preparations had been made. There was a special seat for the goddess where the Master had Sarada sit. The worship began with a prayer by the Master who was by now in a semi-conscious state:

O Lady, O Mother Tripurasundari who art the controller of all powers, open the door to perfection! Purify her (the Holy Mother's) body and mind, manifest Thyself in her and be beneficent.¹⁷

Sarada soon lost consciousness of the outer world completely and was united with the Master on a transcendental plane. At some point during the worship she became filled with the awareness of Divine Motherhood. As the worship came to a close, Sri Ramakrishna offered himself to the Divine Mother as manifested in Sarada. Then he offered everything to her: the results of his sadhana, his rosary, his spiritual practices, himself, and all that was his.¹⁸ He recited another prayer:

O Thou auspicious of all auspicious things, O doer of all actions! O refuge! O the three-eyed One! O the fair-complexioned spouse of Siva! O Narayani!, I bow down to thee, I bow down to thee!¹⁹

The close of this auspicious worship with the recitation of sacred words signifies the

16. Swami Saradananda, *Sri Ramakrishna The Great Master*, trans., Swami Jagadananda, 6th rev. ed., 2 vols. (Mylapore, Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1983), 1:233.

17. Ibid., p. 335.

18. Ibid., p. 336.

19. Ibid.

15. Ibid., 109.

end of Sri Ramakrishna's spiritual practices, his *sadhana*. But it also signifies the beginning of a new era for women and the world.

Why did the *Soḍaṣī*-worship signify the beginning of a new era for woman and the world? First, the Master offered himself to the Divine Mother as manifested in Sarada Devi. Now, exactly what does that mean? One interpretation might be that he would be the instrument of the Divine Mother working through Sarada Devi. Or it could also be said that Sarada Devi received the

power that Sri Ramakrishna had accumulated through spiritual practice to use for the good of humankind. This means that Sarada Devi received in a mature form knowledge, detachment, discrimination, devotion and many other spiritual qualities, all of which would come to fruition as her life unfolded. However one looks at this event, it is clear that great spiritual power became accessible to Sarada Devi. She had from 1872 onwards power to do great things.

(To be concluded)

HINDU ESCHATOLOGY AND COSMOGONY

(Continued from page 504)

and guided by higher souls. *Brahmaloka* is the highest sphere.

Suryaloka or the solar sphere is the lowest, most condensed, wherein exist the visible universes; *prāṇa* is there a physical force and *ākāśa* a sensible matter. The next higher, the lunar sphere, or *chandraloka*, has the habitation of gods, with *prāṇa* as the psychic force and *ākāśa* as *tanmātras*, or fine particles. In the *jyōtirloka*, the *prāṇa* and *ākāśa* are almost inseparable, and the electric force (energy) and matter are indistinguishable.

In the highest *brahmaloka*, neither *prāṇa* nor *ākāśa* exist. Both are merged in the mindstuff, the primal energy. In the absence of both *prāṇa* and *ākāśa*, the *jīva* or individual soul, contemplates the whole universe as the *samaṣṭi*, or the sum total of *Mahat*.

This appears as a *Puruṣa*, an abstract Universal Soul (*Īśvara*). This is not the Absolute *Puruṣa*, as multiplicity still exists, but where from the *jīva* at least can apprehend that Unity which is the be-all and end-all.

The dualists go no further. They want "to taste the sugar" and not to "become it". Following the path of divine love (*bhakti-yoga*), the *bhaktas* like to enjoy the proximity of the Lord in states of *sāyujya* or joined together (not merged); *sārūpya*, or having similar form; or *salokya*, dwelling together in the same *loka*. While the advaitic stand-point is, *Tat-tvam-asi—Thou art That*, or *Aham-Brahmāsmi, I am Brahman or Truth*.

We find that we have come out of divinity (*amṛtasya putrah*); therefore the fact is, that each soul is potentially divine.

Srimad Bhagavatam And Its Eternal Message

A. VISWANATHAN

The author, an engineer and Dean of the Training Institute of Indian Railways in Secunderabad, brings to the fore in this short paper the eternal appeal and profundity of the Srimad Bhāgavatam.

Sri Krishna was born in Dvāpara Yuga. His incarnation (*Avatāra*) is the latest of the ten (*Dāś-avatāra-s*) of Mahā-Viṣṇu. As the Lord Himself said to Arjuna: "*When dharma wiles, and adharma awakens, thereupon I shall issue Myself into the world.*"

Śrīmad Bhāgavatam sings about all these *Avatāra-s* of Lord Viṣṇu, but it is overwhelmingly the story of the delightful *Avatāra* of Lord Krishna—*Kṛṣṇastu bhagavān svayam*. Sri Krishna is the Lord Himself. He is the *Pūrṇa-Avatāra*, and *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* is primarily the story of Lord Sri Krishna.

It is interesting to consider how the story is narrated. It is narrated through three different sets of storytellers and listeners, of differing maturities and capabilities. The first pair are Suta and Saunaka, who represent ordinary individuals immersed in the day to day ministrations of the world. The next pair are Narada and Vyasa. The enlightened eternal sage, Narada prompts Veda Vyasa to sing the *Bhāgavatam*. Veda Vyasa has just completed the stupendous task of outlining all types of human interactions through the story of the Mahabharata, but he still feels some vague apprehension, some dissatisfaction that something is not completed. Narada advises him that he can only get rid of this feeling of inadequateness and dissatisfaction if he sings about the *Pūrṇa-Avatāra* of Lord Sri Krishna.

Such transformation to serenity is something that all of us have experienced at least briefly some time or other. For a short spell

we experience the close proximity of God, and that buoyant feeling seems to last for days and days, until finally it wears away by the attrition of everyday life in the world. What better way to make the happiness last long, than to sing the glory of the Lord!

And then we have the final pair: Sri Suka, the purest of the pure, with whom the bathing *Apsarās* did not find any embarrassment at all, and the virtuous and valorous Parikṣit, who, like many among us, fell victim, partly due to his stars, and partly to a brief lapse arising from his proud royal bearing, and who was disquieted still further by the spectre of his own death within seven days. Sri Suka recited the story of the *Bhāgavatam* to him in these seven days time. Listening to the *Bhāgavatam* cannot ward off destiny, but after these seven days Parikṣit becomes calm and self-possessed, ready to face his inexorable destiny with equanimity, and in fact, eager as a king to uphold the curse laid on him by the forest sage and make it come true. Herein lies the message of *Bhāgavatam* for all of us!

About this sacred book it has been verily written "*Svādu svādu pade pade*"! From one syllable to the next, it is nothing but nectar. Innumerable stories, like pearls, are strung together, each as beautiful as the others. A few stories stand out. One such is the story of the devotee Prahlada and his father Hiranyakasipu who bore inveterate and uncompromising hatred towards the Lord. Little do we realize that the path to the Lord may take various routes. If love

for Him can be a route, hatred too (with its continuous and total absorption in Him), may become a way equally effective. The Lord is free of all our ordinary relative conceptions of what is good and what is bad. If we can understand Hirāṇyakaśipu, we can truly understand the world better and live with our fellow men. When, finally, the father challenges Prahlada to demonstrate the Lord's presence, the Lord condescends to help the innocent Prahlada and make his words come true, by issuing forth from a pillar. When the celestials became frightened at the approach of Lord Narasimha in his towering rage, they sent for the innocent Prahlada to pacify him. Bhakta Prahlada is clear minded and refuses the temptation to receive a boon from the Lord. Instead, he seeks continuous Awareness! Is this not a lesson for us ordinary mortals, who strive and struggle for worldly gains?

Another story that stands out is the story of Gajendramokṣam. Indra Dymna, no doubt virtuous, but so obsessed with his own rituals and pursuits as to shut out the whole world (as we see so many such around us), himself turns into a similar animal, viz. an elephant. Preoccupied with the householder's responsibilities, and victim to all the attendant dangers, the elephant sinks deeper and deeper into the lake, only the tip of his trunk being left above water. But, attributable to his past karmas, and owing to his great good fortune, the elephant retains the memory of his previous birth, and with the last vestige of life left in him he offers a lotus flower in supplication to the Lord. Have not many of us at some time or other passed through such an experience? On becoming aware of the devotee's supplication in his time of danger, the Lord rushes instantaneously to rescue his devoted *bhakta*. Verily, this story offers solace in times of distress.

The story of *Vāmana Avatāra* (the Dwarf Incarnation of Viṣṇu) too, has a deep inner meaning: the vanquishment of worldly pride in Maha Bali by the small nucleus of goodness that in its inherent Power grows steadily larger and larger in the shape of Vāmana. The story of Ambariṣa shows how the steadfast devotee has no need for any form of anxiety: All the forms of danger that attempt to overthrow him go the full circle of futility, and come back to the devotee with bowed head, seeking his pardon.

Through the medium of Parikṣit, Sri Suka thus narrates many such stories, and steadily lifts our consciousness Godward. When we become fit to receive the greatest story of all, Sri Suka begins to unfold *Srī Kṛṣṇa Caritam*, the story of the life of Sri Krishna. After His birth in the thick of adversity and dangers, from babyhood onwards, Sri Krishna performs many miracles--the destruction of Putanā, and the sublimation of her body by the mere act of His divine touch; the revelation of His all-enveloping Cosmic Form when He opens His mouth to the wondering foster mother, the blessed Yaśoda; the destruction of various demons that beset Gokulam and Himself. These are all sweet and elevating stories of the Divine Incarnation. *Brahma* represents the unripe intellect of Man that does not comprehend the Lord's mystery, and dares to doubt and question Him. And in *Kāliya Mardanam*, we are told how the Lord painstakingly and laboriously extracts the poisons from the mind of Man. Total absorption in the Lord leaves no room for consciousness of self or the world--this is the story of *Gopi Vāstrā-paharanam*. The umbrella of God's protection is total, as in the lifting of the Govardhana mountain. When a devotee is enamoured of the Lord, he wishes to be possessed and permeated by Him--totally, atom by single atom. There is no place for

(Continued on page 519)

Silence—My Virgin Mother

S. K. CHAKRAVORTY

In the deeps of silence, when the mind is still, the truth has a chance to reveal, Dr. S. K. Chakravorty, Professor at the Indian Institute of Management in Calcutta, seems to say.

Days three hundred fifty and five from now,
O glorious Shiva, I had cried at Thy feet to see Thee aglow.
But this day, as Thou liftest Thy veil, full and whole,
I wonder and wonder why I see in Thee
Only my sweet Mother of Virgin Silence!

The mist is gone, no more is the haze—
Draped Thou art, Mother, in flowing green below.
With the caressing blue as Thy scarf above.
O Silence, my Mother, how benign!
How chaste and bright is Thy brow with sandal snow!

The ceaseless plaintive song of the nameless bird,
From the viewless depth of Thy bosom, O Mother—
Is that Thy lullaby for this frantic child of earth?
Alas! I feel it not, nor follow,
Tho' for ages, I thought, I secretly have pined for it.

Why not?—my loving silent Mother—you ask.
So, this I confess: I couldn't care less;
I am of the world real where boom and bang—
Sonic and super—have sealed my ears,
Thy notes of music are now more than Greek to them.

Hush! Let my Mother speak—
My very dear Virgin Silence quietly sing.
But seems Thy precious virginity now stands sullied—how sad!
Shrill human words and strained laughter, vulgar and profane
All a bleeding affront—my sacred silent Mother.

The wondrous sage of *Savitri* hath spoken:
'When mind is still, then truth gets her chance—
To be heard in the purity of silence.'
The glorious writer of *Heroes and Hero Worship* hath said:
'Silence is as deep as eternity, speech as shallow as time.'

REVIEWS & NOTICES

SAINTS AND MYSTICS: Published by Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras 600 004. pp. iv plus 247. Rs. 20/-.

This handy volume presents in a brief compass the lives and teachings of fourteen saints and mystics from different religions and diverse times. Though not a representative collection, it has covered practically all the major religious traditions, like Hinduism, Judaism, Christianity and Sikhism. The lives of modern spiritual giants like Sri Aurobindo, Sri Ramana Maharshi, Swami Brahmananda (the spiritual 'son' of Sri Ramakrishna), Swami Virajananda (a disciple of Swami Vivekananda) are also given due place in this collection as they rejuvenated ancient Vedic teachings, making them accessible to the modern man entangled within the problems peculiar to the age of strife and stress; and professed that spirituality and practicality can go hand in hand. The life of Gopaler Ma—a woman devotee of Sri Ramakrishna, beautifully presents the parental attitude of *vātsalya* towards Sri Ramakrishna; whereas bridal mysticism is represented by the lives of Goda Devi and Akka Mahadevi.

All the articles are very good, well-written studies giving brief sketches of the saints' lives, their missions and precepts. The authors are learned, prolific writers and include senior monks of the Ramakrishna Order. The articles originally appeared in the annual number of the monthly *Vedanta Kesari* for 1989, published by the Ramakrishna Math, Madras. The need for study of the great lives is beautifully emphasized in the Prologue—that they educate, inspire and purify us. To quote from it (page 6): "A saintly life educates us about what spiritual life means, where it leads to, and how it has to be practised." It is very rightly stated that "it is an education that reveals to us both the way and the goal. Their authentic lives anchored in spirit, fill the true seeker with hope, faith and inspiration." (page 8)

In between the lines we feel the spirit of the great saints and could catch a glimpse of their earnest zeal and burning desire to

know the Truth. One gets inner strength from their lives and teachings and becomes convinced that true spirituality and higher states of consciousness are not fancies, but are real possibilities worth striving for.

This neat, handy book must find a place on the shelf of every spiritual seeker, and in the hands of students and youths in their formative period, it will be a perennial source of inspiration. It is a marvellous publication, with fine get-up, printing etc.—true to the tradition of Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras.

Dr. Chetana Mandavia
Junagadh.

OM, GAYATRI AND SANDHYA: By Swami Mukhyananda. Published by Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras 600-004, 1989. pp. x plus 88. Rs. 10/-.

The *Gayatri* is the most sacred and sublimest of Hindu prayers which has been recited by millions of people, from the very beginning of the Vedic period down to today. It forms a part of the *Saṁdhyā Upāsana* (meditation), the obligatory daily worship by the aspirant. Sri Ramakrishna used to say that the "*Saṁdhyā* merges in the *Gāyatrī* and the *Gāyatrī* merges in *OM*." Truly, the mantra incorporates all the ideas of the OM symbolism. OM, the Pranava, is the briefest and the most comprehensive spiritual symbol. No mantra is complete without the OM as its prefix. In the book under review, the profound truths and deep philosophy underlying *OM*, *Gāyatrī* and *Saṁdhyā* are explained lucidly by the author, a learned senior monk of the Ramakrishna Order.

The book is divided into three parts. *Part I* is devoted to *The Symbolism of OM and the Gayatri Mantra*, where it is shown how the word OM signifies the Supreme Infinite Divine Reality, with special references to the four Cosmic Planes on the Macrocosmic level, and their corresponding states at the human level. Within a few pages the revered Swamiji has neatly compressed a lot of useful information about the importance of *OM* and the *Gāyatrī* in the light of various *Upaniṣads*. This pro-

vides the necessary philosophical background underlying the mantra, and could be of immense help to the aspirant for performing ritual with clear understanding and deep faith.

Part II is entitled '*Gāyatrī Mantra and Sāindhyā Upāsana*'. The true meaning of *Sāindhyā*, its main features, procedure of the rituals, and preparations for the performance of *Sāindhyā* are presented in detail with clarity.

Details of Practice of Sāindhyā Worship constitute *Part III*. For the convenience of those who intend to use the book for the performance of *Sāindhyā* in the orthodox style, this part gives complete details regarding the mantras to be chanted (with their English translations), and procedures to be adopted.

The book is a useful and elevating contribution for it explains the unique significance and the deep philosophy behind the *Gāyatrī Mantra* and the *Sāindhyā Upāsana*, as also it serves as a practical manual on the practice of *Sāindhyā Vaidanā*. Essentially it gives a new dimension to the practice of *Gāyatrī*, which, in the hands of Orthodox Brahmins has become a mere formal ritual. This book is a must for all those who are interested in understanding and practising the ancient Vedic ritual of *Sāindhyā*. Needless to say that, the importance of this Supreme Spiritual practice increases manifold if an aspirant performs the *Upāsana* with contemplation of its meaning and its deep implications.

Dr. Chetana Mandavia
Junagadh.

SRIMAD BHAGAVATAM AND ITS ETERNAL MESSAGE

(Continued from page 515)

any other emotion except love---this is the *Rasakṛdā*, the Divine Play. Like Rukmiṇī, a devotee has only to briefly indicate his love for Sri Krishna, and He comes rushing to take possession of His devotee.

The human being is an infinitely valuable creation of God. When well tended, he can produce great results, like the gem Syamantaka. But ill-kept, and improperly used, he becomes the plaything of monkeys, and can cause death, destruction and suspicion and a chain of evil action and reaction.

One of the sweetest of stories in the *Bhāgavatam* is that of the *Sudāma Caritam*. Sudāma, a pious devotee, has no mind for worldly goods. His mind is planted in God. And yet God takes an exact inventory of all his unpelt needs and fulfils them. Can there

be a better lesson for our anxious minds!

As the tale proceeds into maturity, we see Krishna develop from the infant charmer of the gopis, through stages into the dauntless warrior who effortlessly wrestles Jambavan for twentyeight days and nights till the latter submits to utter fatigue and surrender, and who practised with bow and arrow until with consummate ease finally He destroys Narakāsura. Sri Krishna serves as the Ambassador of Good, to the abode of Evil, and as a supreme teacher of the philosophy of life to Arjuna and to all humanity. The Lord's words of wisdom and advice in the final portions of the *Bhāgavatam* startle us with their sheer relevance to our present day world. It is indeed futile to try to measure the ocean of His glory with our little intellect.

PRACTICAL SPIRITUALITY

Place: Belur Math. Time: December 22, 1930.

It was the birthday of the Holy Mother. From early morning Mahapurushji had been calling on the Mother, as though he was a little child dependent on his mother. With folded hands and closed eyes he prayed: "Mother, Mother, O Thou Great Mother, glory to Thee! glory to Thee! Mother, grant us devotion, faith, full faith, knowledge, detachment, love, concentration, and God-absorption. Do good to this organization of the Master; do good to the whole world; grant peace to the world." He sat silent for a while, and then added: "We have no devotion, and so we cannot fully realize the greatness of days like this. Is this an ordinary day? This is the birthday of the Great Mother. It was the Great Mother Herself who took birth on this day for the good of the world and its creatures. It is hard to understand how God plays by accepting human bodies. How can one understand unless He makes one do so out of His grace? How commonplace a life she led! How hidden remained her spiritual stature, as though She were in disguise! How little can we understand her! The Master alone understood her properly. He told me one day, 'The Mother that is in that (Kali) temple, and the mother who lives in the concert tower are the same.' The next one who knew her was Swamiji. Ah, what a deep reverence he had for the Holy Mother! He said that it was because of the blessing of the Holy Mother that he could go to the other shore of the sea and be victorious."

"As the monks came in one by one to salute him, he kept on asking most of them, "Did you see the Mother?" The number of devotees was rather great, it being a Sunday. About three thousand devotees, both men and women, had *prasada* at noon. When it was very cloudy in the morning, many had feared that it would rain and mar the celebration. When an old monk expressed some concern on this score, Mahapurushji kept silent for a while and then said: "No, there is no fear. By the Mother's grace, there will be no trouble. She is the maker of good, and she will do good to all."

Gangadhar Maharaj (Swami Akhandananda) came to join the celebration in the afternoon. Mahapurushji was very glad to meet him. A party was singing *Chandikirtana* at the Holy Mother's temple. This was the first performance there of this kind, and Mahapurushji kept on enquiring every now and then how it was progressing. Lastly he said: "The name of our Holy Mother is Sarada (which means Sarasvati, the goddess of learning). The Mother is none other than Sarasvati. It is she who grants illumination out of her grace. Illumination means the knowledge of God. One can have true and firm devotion only when one is vouchsafed this knowledge, and not otherwise. Pure knowledge and pure devotion are the same. And all that comes from the grace of the Mother alone. Knowledge is dispensed at her bidding."

From *'For Seekers of God.*

Prabuddha Bharata

OR

AWAKENED INDIA

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By Karma, Jñana, Bhakti and Yoga,
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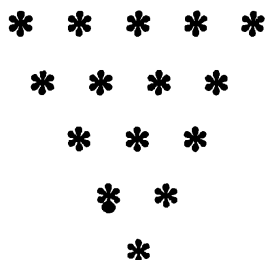
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